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Pennsylvania ANGLER



Straight Talk

Trout/Salmon Permit Revenue Advances Coldwater Fishing Programs

On January 30, 1989, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission authorized staff to implement proposed rulemaking for a regulation requiring a $5 trout/salmon permit to fish for trout and salmon in Pennsylvania waters. At that time the Commission planned to have the new requirement in place by January 1, 1990, but delays in the Office of the Budget postponed implementation until January 1, 1991.

When the program was implemented, the Commission promised to use the new revenue for current coldwater fishing programs, expand efforts in many program areas, and implement programs to keep the coldwater fish propagation and public fishing facilities operating efficiently.

As we pass the end of 1993, the third year of the trout/salmon stamp program, let's review the progress made possible by the use of these new funds. Here are the program results.



Edward R. Miller, P.E.
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

• **Revenues received.** As of July 1, 1993, stamp sales have produced $10.4 million. However, license sales revenue has dropped $2.1 million, leaving a net gain of $8.3 million.

• **Propagation efficiency program.** In 1991, we began a major 10-year fish culture station improvement program designed to keep Pennsylvania's strong national leadership role. The purpose of the program is to upgrade coldwater facilities to meet operational and environmental needs and provide trout and salmon needed to expand coldwater fishing opportunities.

Nearly $4.6 million has been expended or encumbered at Pleasant Gap, Bellefonte, Benner Spring, Reynoldsdale, Tionesta, Corry, Big Spring, Tylersville and Huntsdale Fish Culture stations for major improvements. Improvements include waste collection and treatment facilities, chemical containment storage units, oxygen-generating systems, replacement of buried fuel tanks, bird protection structures, water treatment systems, electrical upgrades, pump replacements, and other major improvements. Conversion of trout stocking trucks to diesel-driven fiberglass tank units is nearly 80 percent complete with 40 of 49 trucks now replaced or budgeted. These efforts reduce vehicle operating costs, extend the useful life of equipment and increase operational efficiency. In addition, trout hatchery operating budgets have been increased nearly $1 million during a three-year period, and production of trout and salmon has remained at current high levels. The Lake Erie steelhead trout stocking programs produced record adult steelhead returns this fall.

• **Acquisition of coldwater resources.** The Commission acquired a section of Penns Creek in Centre County, Elk Creek Access Site on Lake Erie, Cush Creek Access, Clearfield County, Fishing Creek Easement, Clinton County, a large section of Spring Creek, Centre County, Ingham Springs, Bucks County, Lake Pleasant Access (lease) and Fishing Creek Access, Columbia County, at a total cost of nearly $3 million.

• **Habitat protection, enhancement.** The Commission has revised its Adopt-a-Stream Program and now conducts nearly 100 stream projects each year using volunteer labor. New habitat improvement guides have been produced. The complement of permanent conservation officers has been increased by 10 new salaried employees. Ten seasonal officers are now being trained and new deputies have been added to aid in coldwater protection. Agency environmental review efforts have been expanded through an agreement with PennDot, enabling staff expansion for accelerated review of highway projects affecting coldwater streams and wetlands.

• **Comprehensive planning.** The Commission implemented the first agency-wide comprehensive planning effort for carrying out its public mission. Efforts have produced a draft 10-year strategic plan to guide the agency through the year 2004. We will circulate the plan publicly for input in 1994.

• **Management of coldwater fisheries.** We conducted a statewide trout anglers telephone survey through contract with the University of Pittsburgh and use-and-harvest surveys to obtain data on angler participation, preferences and opinions on Pennsylvania's coldwater programs. This user information marks a "first" for having this kind of data available for formation of agency trout management decisions designed to increase coldwater fishing opportunities.

Additional delayed-harvest and other specially regulated waters have been created, and the Class A Wild Trout Streams list has been expanded to more than 800 miles.

• **Aquatic resource education.** The K.A.R.E. Program (Keystone Aquatic Resource Education) has been expanded and now includes 3,000 trained public school teachers throughout the Commonwealth. These enthusiastic volunteers are capable of reaching nearly 200,000 youngsters annually. In addition, we now have fishing skills training efforts in operation in both the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia areas and other statewide locations. More than 147 volunteers have been trained as fishing skills instructors to conduct programs introducing citizens of all ages to environmental awareness and the joys of fishing.

This summary shows where the majority of the trout/salmon stamp revenue has been used. It is the Commission's intention to continue these efforts to expand coldwater fishing opportunities for Pennsylvania anglers.

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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

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The cover

This issue's front cover was photographed by Doug Stamm. If you're beginning to think about Opening Day and where to fish this season, check out Mike Bleech's article on page 4, in which he reveals the favorite places of some Pennsylvania anglers. On page 17, Seth Cassell tells the secrets of York County's Codorus Creek, and on page 24, Linda Steiner explains why eastern Venango County's Hemlock Creek watershed could be the place to be early this season. Ice fishermen ought to check out page 14 for George Smith's explanation of where to fish for pickerel in the Poconos, and on page 20, Mike Bleech takes us right to northcentral Pennsylvania's best ice fishing. Whatever your favorite kind of fishing might be, see page 4 for Darl Black's detailed list of how to get ready for the season. Learning the finer fishing skills when there's no one to show you is the focus of the "SMART Anglers Notebook," on page 31. Be sure to add the book on page 23 to your collection, and for an irresistible subscription deal, please look at this issue's back cover.

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18 Tackle Tips

by Darl Black

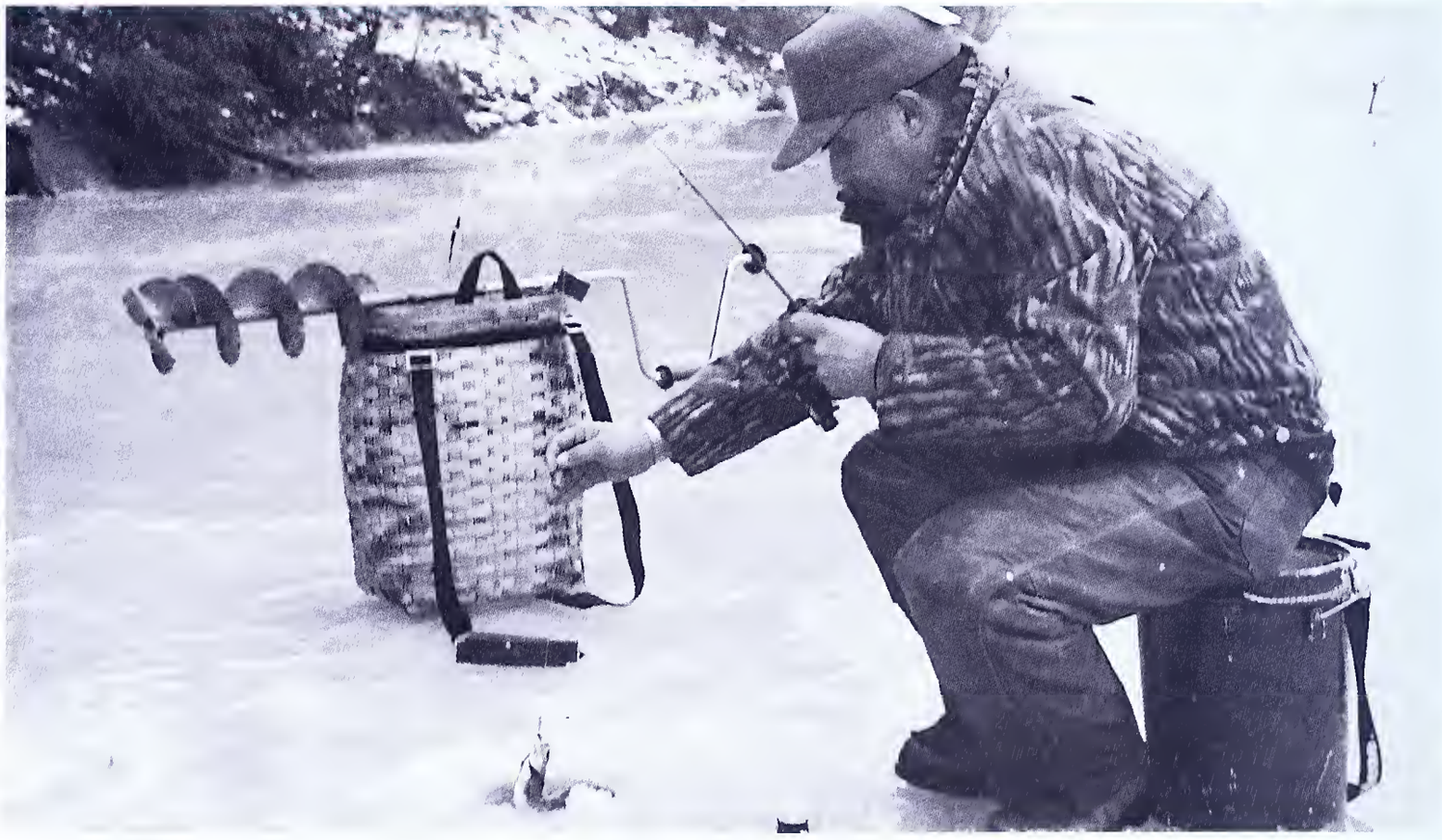


photo-Darl Black

All internal reel gears require a light coating of reel grease. Other moving parts should receive a drop of oil. Do not over-lubricate. Wipe the exterior with a cloth sprayed with WD-40 or similar moisture displacing product.

What does a die-hard open-water angler do when winter's ice cover finally sets in? Prepare for the spring thaw, of course. Attention to tackle during off-season is a too-often-overlooked critical element of fishing success. Preparation begins now. Tackle care and maintenance contribute to making you a better angler. Use these 18 tips to tilt the odds next season in your favor.

1 In your basement, den, or out-of-the-way work space, lay out all the contents of your tackle boxes. Inventory all lures and terminal tackle. (Provide written lists and photos of everything, including rods and reels, to your insurance agent or place the lists in a safe deposit box in case tackle is stolen, lost in a fire, etc.) Set aside all lures that need some work—chipped paint, broken or rusted hooks, gummed skirts, etc. Make a shopping list of lures/terminal tackle that needs to be replaced.

2 If you have a hollow plastic plug that suffered punctures from the teeth of a pike or musky, here is a quick fix. Buy

a can of insulating foam, available at hardware stores. Drill two holes at opposite ends of the lure. Following instructions on the can, insert the tube and fill the lure with foam. After the foam sets up, seal each drilled hole (and tooth holes) with epoxy glue or silicone sealant.

3 Wood lures that have chips or scrapes in the paint must be fixed, too. Several light coats of paint and a clear sealer will do the job. Plastic model paint does not hold up on lures. Specific lure paint may be purchased. Vinyl jig paint does a good job. Marred metal flake finishes on baits? Check out the little jars of auto touch-up paint found at automotive centers.

4 Skirts on spinnerbaits, buzzbaits and flipping jigs often become gummy or matted as a result of repeated wetting and drying, or from contact with soft-plastic trailers. This is especially true with "living rubber" skirts. Replace old gummed-up skirts with either silicone plastic or Lumaflex, two new skirt materials available at many tackle stores. Never store soft-plastic trailers on skirted lures.

5 Here is a trick when installing a new skirt. The skirt material is held together in the center by a tiny rubber band. Slide the band about a third of the way toward one end. Now insert the hook point through the side with the longer skirt strands and slip it into place on the lure. The "short" end should extend to the end of the hook, and the "long" end will billow back over the hook, ending about the same point on the hook as the short end—thereby giving you a balanced skirt without trimming.

6 Sharpen each tine of treble hooks before installing the hook on a lure. Buy hooks in boxes of 50 or 100 and sharpen a box while watching TV. Round-bend straight-point hooks are favored by most anglers today. This kind of hook provides a better bite. Avoid hooks with a curved-in point. They are next to impossible to sharpen properly and result in a lower percentage of hookups. Be sure the trebles do not tangle with one another when installed on a plug. If they do, switch to short-shank trebles. Most bass and walleye lures perform best either with a size 6 or 4, occasionally as large as a 2. Panfish lures usually need a 10 or 8.

7 Winter is the perfect time to mold your own leadhead jigs for soft-plastic grubs. By making your own jigheads, you can adjust the size hook for the species sought and use a better quality hook. Most commercially manufactured jigheads use hooks that are too small for bass or walleyes in the lightweight heads, and are made with inferior hooks—either too brittle or curved-in points.

8 Perform any modifications you wish to make on lures. Here are some examples:

• On most long minnow lures equipped with three trebles, I remove the middle treble hook because it rarely hooks a fish in the mouth, but inevitably lodges in the gill or near the eye when a fish is mouth-hooked on the front treble.

• I purchased several lipless rattle baits that were supposed to suspend. However, they floated quickly back to the surface when I stopped cranking. After wrapping small pieces of soft lead wire on the hook shanks, they now suspend.

• Some popular lures provide better hooking opportunities with a larger or smaller size hook than equipped when purchased. If you think you're losing fish because of hooks that are too small, try a larger size.

9 Wash your empty tackle boxes with soapy water, and rinse and dry them thoroughly before replacing lures. Consider the efficiency of your tackle storage. Perhaps a new box is on



photos-Darl Black

the horizon. Check out a modular system that offers interchangeable utility cases that strap or slide into a larger carrier. This lets you divide tackle into separate cases by species or types of water, thereby taking only the cases needed for a particular outing.

10 Empty 35mm film canisters make excellent storage for small terminal tackle such as swivels, snaps, lure rattles, beads, bobber stops, hooks and sinkers. Placed in a larger case or tackle tray, this system is better than the typical divided case where small items may slip into the next compartment, or spill everywhere if the case is tipped. Fuji film canisters are see-through. Kodak canisters are not.

11 Today's soft plastic lures no longer react with modern tackle box plastic, but many grub and worm colors still bleed if mixed together. If you don't have divided cases to keep colors separated, store them in zip-lock bags. Put a drop of plastic worm softener in each bag to keep baits soft and slippery. Adding a drop of scent may seem like a good idea, but be careful. Depending on the base, some scents dry and stiffen worms during long storage.

12 Many manufacturers offer soft plastic either impregnated with salt or packaged in salt. If you have salty plastic baits, always keep them in a zip-lock bag. Salt draws moisture, which in turn results in rusty hooks throughout the box or case. Don't even keep a salty soft plastic on a jighead or worm hook for a few days—trust me on this!

13 Remove reels from rods. Wash rods with a mild soapy water solution. A teaspoon of dish detergent to a quart of water works. Dry thoroughly—preferably overnight. Then spray each rod (except the handle) with Blakemore Reel & Line Magic, a preparation that protects rods from UV damage and covers minor cosmetic scratches. Or wipe down with a cloth sprayed lightly with WD-40.

18 Tackle Tips

14 Inspect all wrappings and guides, replacing any that are bent or cracked, or that have frayed wrappings. Carefully examine the tiptop on each rod because this guide is most likely to develop a fine line-cutting groove. Pass a piece of 2-pound test back and forth in the tip or run a piece of a cotton ball through the eye to see if it catches. Replace the tiptop, if necessary.

15 When observing how some anglers store their rods for long periods, I cringe. Often rods are heaped together in a corner for the winter. Sometimes reels on rigged rods are cranked tight, putting a bow in the rod. Both of these practices can damage rod blanks by leaving a permanent bend in the rod. Some experts recommend suspending each blank by the tiptop on a small cup hook. I prefer a rod rack that keeps them standing upright. An effective and inexpensive storage rack can be made by using screws or nails to attach spring-hinged clothespins to a 1" x 3" board. Next, attach the board to a wall with metal "L" shelf brackets. With butts resting on the floor, rods are clipped in the clothespins.

16 Reels require inspection and lubrication. Hopefully you saved the reel manual, which explains in detail the specifics of maintenance. In general terms, all internal reel gears require a light coating of reel grease. Other moving parts should receive a drop of oil. Do not over-lubricate. Wipe the exterior with a cloth sprayed with WD-40 or similar moisture displacing product.

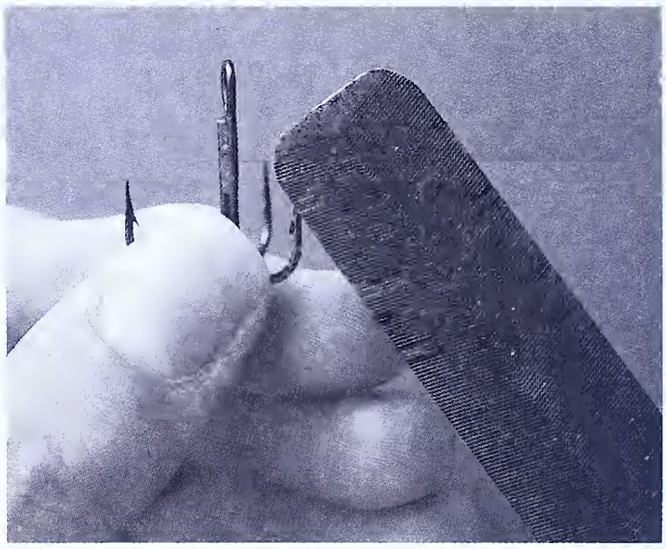
Be careful when disassembling a reel. Years ago spinning and free-spool casting reels were relatively simple to take apart, clean, lubricate and re-assemble—they were designed with just that in mind. Even if you didn't have the reel manual, you could most likely figure it out.

However, today reel manufacturers are using more shortcuts to make reels lighter and reduce production costs. The exploded parts diagrams are so small you cannot understand how parts fit together. The result is increased difficulty in taking apart reels, as well as the need for specialty tools. My advice nowadays is simply to remove the side plate and lubricate what can be reached without any further disassembly. Replace the side plate and lubricate the exterior sites as prescribed in your instruction booklet (handle, level wind, spool shaft bearings/bushings, free-spool button, line roller and shaft). If the reel malfunctions, send it to a professional service center or buy a new one if the repair people want too much to fix it.

17 Chest waders, hip boots and float tubes require attention, too. Rubber waders or boots should be treated with Armor-All or similar protectant before storage. Neoprene waders should be thoroughly sprayed inside and out with silicone water repellent spray or Armor-All. The air bladders from float tubes should be deflated and removed. If using a rubber innertube as an air bladder in a tube, be sure to spray it with Armor-All.

18 What about nets? I use only a "rubber mesh" net for bass and walleyes. I spray a new net with a heavy coating of Armor-All and annually treat it again each winter. This prolongs the life of the net. Although I do not recommend the use of stiff nylon mesh nets because they can injure fish that are to be released, a torn nylon mesh bag may be repaired with heavy monofilament line.

Be prepared for the next fishing season without the last-minute rush in the spring to mend, replace, repair or clean. Although you may not be wetting a line for a few months, these maintenance steps increase success in the long run by keeping things in order and working smoothly.



How to Sharpen a Hook

With very few exceptions, hooks are not sharp enough right from the package. Follow this procedure for ordinary hooks. Tools needed are a quality fine-tooth flat file and an automatic hook sharpener.

The object is to create a diamond-shaped cutting point with a needle tip. Two new surfaces are created in addition to the four surfaces already on the hook.

(1) Starting at the top backside of the hook point, take about six strokes with the file at a 45-degree slant from each side of the hook, creating two new cutting surfaces.

(2) Take three to four file strokes on each side of the inside of the point, starting at the top of the barb and running to the tip of the point. Be sure the file does not catch at the base of the barb, thereby creating a groove or rough spot. Better yet, squeeze the barb flat with a pair of pliers. Then stroke the inside cutting edges.

(3) Take one to two file strokes on each side of the hook point.

(4) Only at this stage should a battery or rechargeable hook sharpener be used for three to five seconds. This puts a cone shape on the very tip of the hook point, and it eliminates any feathering of the point.

(5) Spray sharpened points with rust-inhibiting WD-40 and let them dry before storing or installing.

The result is a hook with a needle tip coupled with six cutting edges. With practice each single hook takes about 30 seconds—about 1 1/2 minutes for a treble.

Note: Hooks smaller than size 10 require a smaller file or a machinist's sharpening stone. A file should not be used on hooks manufactured with a cone point, such as Gamakatsu. Instead, use only a hook sharpener that creates a cone point.—*DB*.



Replacing a Tiptop

In addition to the new tiptop, tools needed include a pair of short-nose pliers or similar holding device, solid stick adhesive, and either a lighted candle or a small alcohol burner.

(1) Carefully pass the old tiptop under the flame for a few seconds and gently pull it free with the pliers. Scrape the old adhesive off the rod with a penknife or utility blade.

(2) Melt one end of the solid stick adhesive. Glue sticks used in a hot glue gun work if you don't have a stick of ferrule cement. Direct a couple of drops into the new tiptop and run a tiny bit on the rod tip. Don't burn the rod blank or thread wrappings.

(3) Holding the new tiptop with pliers, warm it carefully under the flame and immediately slide it onto the rod tip, aligning it with the other guides before the glue sets. Let it cool for about 15 minutes and you are ready to fish.

Note: A very handy device is a Rod Tip & Tiptop Gauge. This gadget lets you determine the correct size of a replacement tiptop without taking the rod to the tackle store. These devices are available at stores or through shops handling rod building supplies. When you're on an extended fishing trip, it's a good idea to carry several different tiptop sizes with you for on-site repairs.—*DB*.

Replacing a Rod Guide

If you need to replace only a single guide on a rod, you probably do not want to invest $200 in a manual rod wrapping device and motorized dryer.

Here is a "budget" wrapper: A cup to hold the spool of thread, several heavy books to create thread tension, and a set of rod rollers made from inverted furniture casters screwed back to back into blocks of wood. In place of the casters, bent coat hangers clamped to a table top or blocks of wood with felt-lined "V" cuts could support the rod.

Other required supplies include a spool of rod-wrapping thread, very sharp utility knife or razor blade, several small strips of masking tape about a quarter-inch wide, short length of 6-pound mono tied in a loop, half-inch brushes, color preserver/thread sealer, two-part epoxy rod finish, and disposable mixing cups.

(1) Carefully cut the old wrappings and remove the broken guide. Carefully scrape and/or polish the blank with emery cloth until area is smooth.

(2) Align the new guide with others on the blank and tape it in place with the narrow cuts of masking tape. Tape close to the frame, leaving the end of the guide foot exposed.

(3) Run the end of the thread through the pages of a large book, placing additional books on top to create the necessary tension on the thread.

(4) Hold the end of the thread on the blank near the foot, parallel with the rod. Begin wrapping a half-inch from the foot of the guide by rotating the rod. Run the thread wraps back over the end of the thread to secure it. This requires about six or eight turns. Trim the tag end.

(5) Keep the thread angled slightly as you rotate the rod blank. The thread will wrap itself. Wrap over the foot of the guide. Remove the tape and continue wrapping until you reach a point about an eighth-inch from the end.

(6) Lay the loop of monofilament on the blank and wrap the final six to eight turns. Cut the thread, allowing about a one-inch tag. Stick the tag into the mono loop and pull the loop back through the wrap, along with the tag end. Trim the tag thread end close to the wrap.

(7) Make the final adjustment on alignment of the guide before applying thread sealer. Let the sealer dry.

(8) Mix the epoxy finish and apply it with a brush. Be careful not to use too much. Rotate the rod by hand for several minutes until the finish is evenly distributed. As it begins to set, the rod must be turned every four or five minutes for the next several hours.

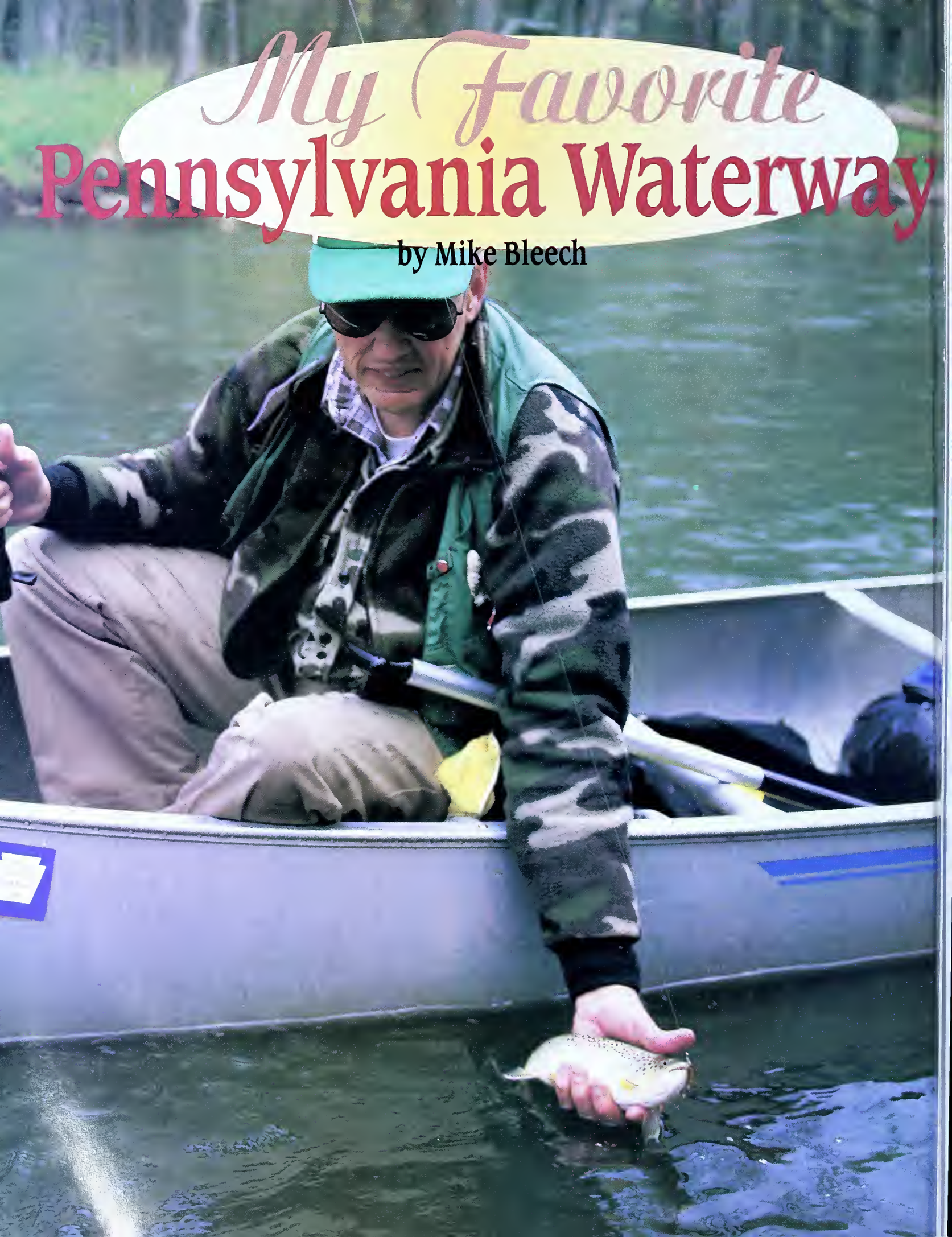
Note: In a field emergency, fingernail polish may be used to secure frayed wrappings.—*DB*.

Build a rod rack this winter. Use screws or nails to attach spring-hinged clothespins to a 1x3 board. Attach the board to a wall. Clip the rods in the clothespins, rod butts resting on the floor.



My Favorite Pennsylvania Waterway

by Mike Bleech



One of the things that occupies anglers' thoughts during the dead of winter is a dream fishing trip, a visit to the best fishing water in the state. But where is the best fishing water in the state? This became my quest—finding the best fishing water in Pennsylvania, the place to go for a dream-come-true fishing trip.

A question like this is bound to initiate arguments. After all, the answers can only be opinions at best. How valuable are opinions? The key to this quest is who to ask. Most anglers do not have the broad experience of fishing all across the state. A few anglers do, though. Here is what they say.

"It's going to be smallmouth fishing," says **Worth Hammond**, a Warren County angler who gained a lot of his experience while fishing the state bass tournament circuit. "That is by far my strongest fishing passion. And I would not have to go far—Lake Erie!"

Hammond suggests fishing Lake Erie as soon as bass season opens, because that is when the smallmouths are closest to shore. His favorite method is vertical jigging over rock piles, using Hopkins spoons, tube jigs, Sonars, or plastic grubs. "Wind drift, if the wind is suitable, until fish are located, and then use an electric motor to stay over them," he says.

"You can see them 12, 15 feet down," Hammond says. "Those mirrored flashes give me a charge!"

Darl Black, one of the top fishing writers in the country, and a resident of Cochranton, agreed with Hammond on the place and the fish, but not on the time.

"It doesn't take a lot of thought to figure out where I'd like to be," Black says. "Every time I sit back in that miserable weather and think about fishing, it is going to be my desire to go to the Pennsylvania shoreline of Lake Erie and fish for smallmouths. The prime time for me is the end of October and the very first part of November."

Black's preferred fishing method is similar to Hammond's, except that he fishes deeper. He finds the fall schools of smallmouths at depths ranging between 30 feet and 45 feet. "Look where the big flats drop into deeper water, where the structure stops, or just beyond that if there are small, rocky humps," Black says.

"You can get into incredible numbers of fish," Black says. "Once you get the location pinned down, you can just catch fish until your arms get tired. You really haven't lived, if you are a smallmouth fisherman, until you have fished smallmouths on Lake Erie, and particularly in the late fall. We have caught fish up to 7 1/2 pounds up there at that time of the year!"

Pennsylvania anglers really go for those smallmouths! **Harry Redline**, of Huntingdon, has fished all over the state during his jobs as a conservation officer, a fishing tackle company executive and currently a boat salesman. He tabbed smallmouth fishing in the lower Susquehanna River as his dream trip.

"Early to mid-fall, lower Susquehanna, tailrace of Safe Harbor Dam, topwater," Harry says succinctly. "Find smallmouth bass when they have herded a school of gizzard shad into a shoreline cove or somewhere along the grass, and you're hooking a fish every cast."

This pattern, according to Redline, sometimes ties him into dozens of smallmouths in the 12-inch to 16-inch class in a day. Fishing is usually best during the warm part of the day, from mid-October through mid-November. His favorite lure is the Ugly Albert. He says action is best within a quarter-mile of the dam.

Once the tourist season is over on Kinzua, it is unusual to see more than two or three boats on this 12,000-acre lake. Only on the busiest days of the tourist season does it get close to crowded.

Jeff Knapp, an outdoor writer who lives at Indiana, likes late-season walleye and sauger fishing on the lower Allegheny River. He set this scenario:

"I like the last week of walleye season, the middle of March, no ice on the Allegheny River, water conditions normal to just a tad high perhaps, and just a little color to the water. I'd like to be fishing after a four- to five-day warming trend."

Knapp says that the warm spell would include temperatures into the 50s, at least. Water in the larger tributaries would warm into the 40s "which would, in my experience, trigger an incredible bite of numbers of fish, either walleyes or saugers."

He would concentrate his fishing efforts below dams 5, 6, or 7, and near the mouths of the larger tributaries such as Crooked Creek, Kiskiminetas River, or Garret Run. "Live minnows are the best bait, usually hooked to a leadhead jig with a stinger hook. To zero in on bigger walleyes, use big minnows, or add bulk to the jig with a plastic body," Knapp says.



My Favorite Pennsylvania Waterway



photo-Mike Bleech

This pattern has brought more than a hundred fish into Knapp's boat in a day. It is a productive big walleye pattern, too.

"Every year somebody in that stretch of river yanks out a fish that's over 12 pounds, right before the season closes, fish to 13, 14, maybe 15 pounds," Knapp says.

Jeff Mulhollem, editor of *Pennsylvania Afield* and a fine angler from Altoona, is privy to a lot of hot fishing information in addition to his own extensive Keystone State fishing experience.

"The most impressed that I have been is at Wallenpaupack in October. I have never seen a place where you can catch smallmouths like that," he says.

Lake Wallenpaupack is one of the busiest lakes in the state during the tourist season. This at least partially masks the quality of the fishing. "Go when the pleasure boaters are gone," Mulhollem urges.

Good fishing is not the only reason Mulhollem chooses Wallenpaupack during fall. He concedes that some other state waters have smallmouth fishing that is just as good, but the combination of fall foliage and fishing at Wallenpaupack is unbeatable. And I know that a black bear that swam the broad lake during one of his visits when I was there, too, helps make Wallenpaupack memorable.

Crankbaits are his favorite lures for this fishing.

Mike Simmons, Erie newspaper columnist and professor, likes the idea of a trout fishing getaway at Penns Creek, near the borders of Centre, Mifflin, and Union counties. He would



photo-Keri Bleech

launch his canoe at Poe Paddy State Park and float fish during May because of the hatches that come off then.

That is the time of the green drake hatch, he points out. Another reason for floating in May is that water flow is usually adequate. Later during summer, creek flow is normally too low.

"There is a good population of wild trout in it," Simmons says.

Penns Creek, which is a limestone creek, is well-stocked, and many trout hold over, so it has a good mix of age classes and sizes. The brown trout population is especially good. One reason is that the creek and its steep, forested valley is off the beaten path.

"You really get a sense of getting away from civilization," Simmons says.

Pennsylvania Angler and *Boat Pennsylvania* editor **Art Michaels** says, "From late April into June, as long as the season lasts, I enjoy shad fishing on the Delaware River from first light until about nine in the morning."

That answer came as no surprise to me, because I have fished for shad with him, and I have seen that sparkle in his eyes.

Michaels starts fishing the annual migration of American shad in the Easton area during the third of fourth week of April. Later he moves into the Delaware Water Gap.

"I would be there from three or four in the afternoon until dusk, late in the season," Michaels says.

His favorite fishing method is anchoring his boat on the edge of the channel, and casting or still fishing with shad darts, flutter spoons, and flicker spinners.

"My favorite water is probably Raystown," says **Tom Fegely**, a Lehigh County angler who is perhaps the best-known outdoor writer in this state. "I like the diversity, the aura of the place, the scenery."

One of the things Fegely likes about Raystown is its size. It is large enough to handle a lot of fishing pressure without being overcrowded.

"If there is an ideal vacation lake, I'd say it is Raystown," he says.

Lakeside camping makes it possible for a family to vacation there at minimal expense. For the anglers in the family, and I hope this includes the entire family, Raystown has guides and good fishing contacts.

"At least for one day," Fegely suggests, "get yourself a knowledgeable guide."

Fegely's perfect vacation is during spring, when he can hunt turkey gobblers mornings and fish during the evenings.

"I like spring, early May, when you get the alewives up along the shoreline," he says.

His main fishing target during the spring visit would be stripers. Though striper fishing conditions have changed since the introduction of smelt into the lake, spring fishing is still productive, Fegely says.

One of the more accomplished bass tournament anglers in the state, **Jack Bell**, from Kane, is also one of the best all-around anglers I know. For his dream trip he wants muskies.

"I'd have to go to Kinzua Dam," Jack says, referring to the Allegheny Reservoir. Most locals call it either "the reservoir" or Kinzua.

"Start right after the kids go to school," Bell suggests.

The hot musky fishing continues into early December, conditions permitting.

"We have trolled down there a lot of times right against the ice," he says.

Because a good portion of Cowanesque Lake is, essentially, a new lake, it is about to go into that five- to 15-year-old fishing boom that occurs at many Pennsylvania manmade lakes.

Bell likes the Allegheny Reservoir, among many other reasons, because it gets so little fishing pressure. Once the tourist season is over, it is unusual to see more than two or three boats on this 12,000-acre lake. Only on the busiest days of the tourist season does it get close to crowded.

"You're liable to catch a state record in that place," he says.

Trophy potential is another reason Bell likes this situation. He has caught several 40-pounders from the reservoir. Many experts have predicted that if the old state musky record is broken, it will happen at Kinzua.

Bell's method for serious musky fishing at the Allegheny Reservoir is trolling. He uses 40-pound-test line because he trolls his lures right through fallen tree tops. For lures he suggests the Pikie Minnow or Swim Whizz.

Outdoor writer and artist **Linda Steiner**, a resident of Venango County, would headquarter her daydream fishing vacation at a lodge along Kettle Creek. From there she could fly fish for trout at several nearby streams.

"I could access Pine Creek, Slate Run, Cedar Run and Cross Fork Creek," she says. "To me that will always be the heart of Pennsylvania!"

Steiner, though she has been an accomplished angler for most of her life, just got serious about fly fishing a few years ago. She finds the abundant trout, the beautiful Allegheny Highlands scenery, and the cool, clear water a perfect setting for fishing.

"You can catch them any time of day. You can catch them in the summer," Steiner says. "You can fish there even when a lot of the other waters in the state have warmed up."

Fishing in the clear headwaters is challenging, but she finds it good training water. Once you learn to catch trout there, you can catch them anywhere.

My fishing philosophy has always been to grab for the gold ring, even though it usually means taking risks—either fabulous fishing or bust. That's why I pick a lake that so far has just shown hints of greatness—a lake that, I think, is about to boom. The lake I am leading painfully up to—painfully because I am not so sure I want to share this information—is Cowanesque Lake.

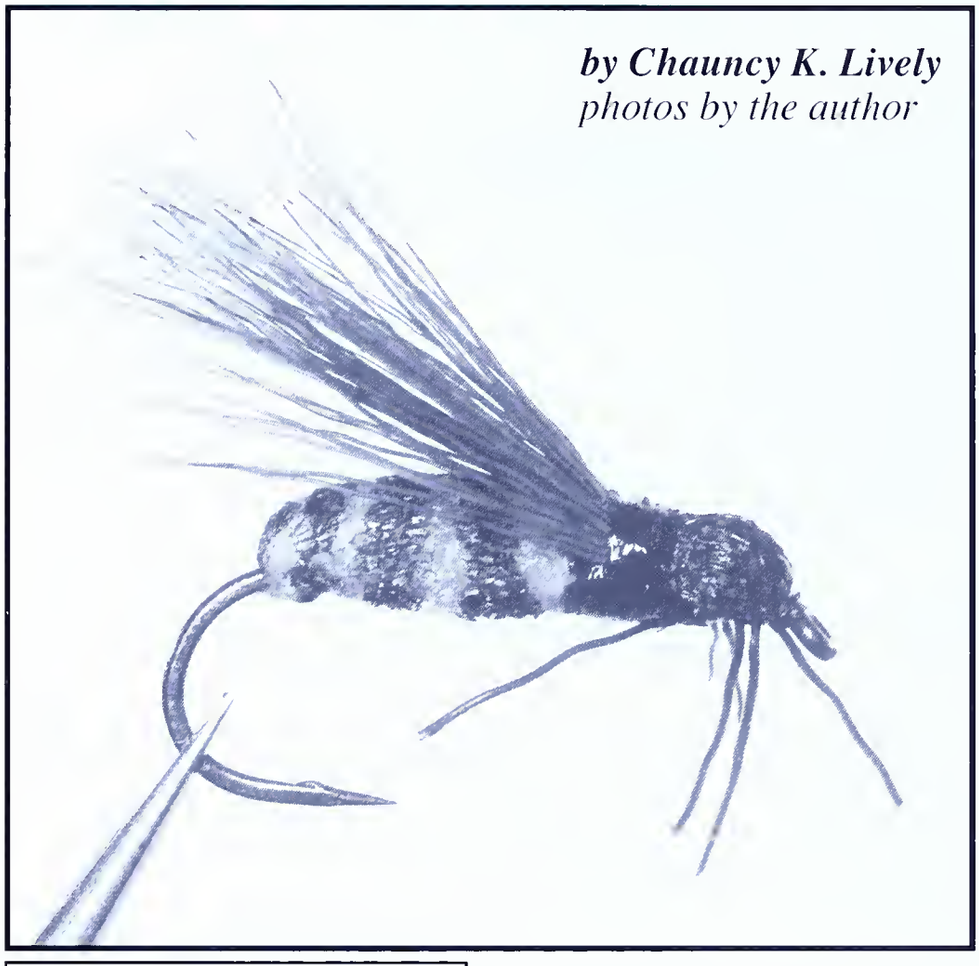
This 1,090-acre lake, hidden close to the New York border in Tioga County, was until just a few years ago only about half its current size. Because a good portion of the lake is, essentially, a new lake, it is about to go into that five- to 15-year-old fishing boom that occurs at many Pennsylvania manmade lakes.

What makes this even more exciting is that a lot of standing timber was flooded when the lake was enlarged. This adds nutrients to the lake, and provides cover for fish.

I am hoping that crappies will be the first fish to show signs of booming, so I will try to be there soon after ice-out. Walleyes, largemouth bass, and muskies should provide plenty of action, too.

The Bumblebee

by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author



The upsurge of angling interest in terrestrial insects has been a phenomenon of this century's second half, spurred on by the writings of Pennsylvanians Crowe, Fox and Marinaro. However, attention to land insects like ants and grasshoppers goes back to earlier years—and notice of bees, even further back, considering the McGinty fly patterns that have been around for a long time.

The vital role played by bees in nature's scheme is well-known. Among all insects they are the most important pollinators, and much of the abundant flora covering our countryside is there because of their tireless diligence. "Busy as a bee" is an apt phrase.

Bees are amazing insects in many ways. Their physical structure belies their ability to fly, and indeed, engineers have said that if principles of aeronautics were theoretically applied to their relatively small wings and heavy bodies, there is no reason to believe they could become airborne. That they fly as well as they do is a tribute to the remarkable motor that powers their wings at such high speeds.

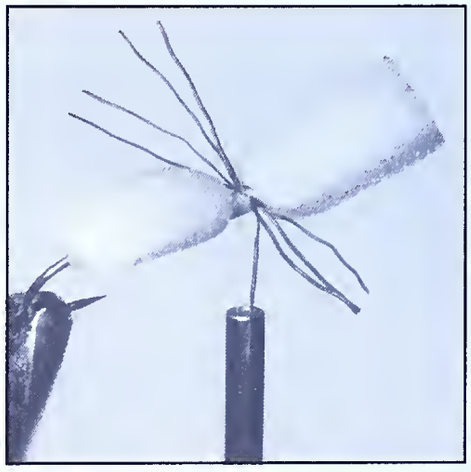
French entomologist J. Henri Fabre wrote of bees with affection and wonder. He especially admired their building skills and believed they were surely endowed with some sort of intuitive mathematical facility. Of their beehive construction he wrote, "In building her hexagonal cells,



1 Prepare the hook by tying in yellow thread one-fourth the shank length behind the eye. Then wind the thread in slightly spaced turns back to the bend. Reverse direction and wind in similarly spaced turns to the original tie-in.



2 Cut a strip of Evasote foam 1/4-inch wide by 1/8-inch thick. Lay the strip along the top of the shank and tie in the fore end behind the eye. Then firmly wrap the thread around the foam and shank in equally spaced turns to the bend, then back to the original tie-in. Trim any excess foam at the fore end.



3 Pull the free end of the foam forward over the back and tie it down at the original tie-in. Firmly wind the thread forward about 1/8-inch in close turns to form a short neck. Build up the neck thickness with two or three additional layers of thread. For legs, lay four moose mane hairs crossways over the forward part of the neck and bind them down with figure-eight turns. Trim the legs to the desired length.

with their floors consisting of three lozenges, the bee solves with absolute precision the arduous problem of how to achieve the maximum result at a minimum cost, a problem whose solution by man would demand a powerful mathematical mind."

Few would deny that the perfect geometry of the beehive makes it a work of art.

Will trout eat errant bees on the water? It seems that some will while others won't. It is a question charged with controversy that began in England in the 1800s when Alfred Ronalds experimentally sent a variety of insects down a miniature chute to the stream's surface to ascertain whether trout would take them. In his conclusions he flatly stated that trout had no interest in bees. Over the years other anglers have agreed with Ronalds' assumptions. On the other hand, equal numbers of fly fishers have enthusiastically endorsed bee patterns, citing impressive individual experiences on various streams.

Actually, this kind of disagreement among anglers is not unusual, and each side can usually present a valid argument. Much depends on where the patterns in question are fished. For many years I considered beetle patterns among the most valuable dry flies an angler can carry on Pennsylvania's trout streams. I still maintain that view. But when I fished beetles on several Michigan trout streams, they were generally greeted with a confidence-shattering ho-hum attitude. Yet, I know anglers who fish beetles in Montana and other western states with great success. Evidently, similar inconsistencies apply to bee patterns as well.

Over time I have struggled to come up with several floating bee patterns, but in turn each was discarded. The first had a banded body of black and yellow chenille that looked decent enough when fresh, but after a few casts it soaked up water like a sponge and sank. Another had a striped body of spun deer body hair, trimmed to shape. It was a better floater but terribly tedious to dress.

It wasn't until Evasote foam became available that I really got serious about a bee pattern, and the Bumblebee was the outcome. Evasote—also known as Fly Foam or Wonder Foam—is an ideal material for obese bee bodies. It is easily manipulated, tough, buoyant and readily accepts tinting with marking pens. Many fly shops carry this foam in 1/8-inch-thick sheets and in several colors. However, if desired colors are not available, simply use white foam and color it to suit with a permanent marking pen.

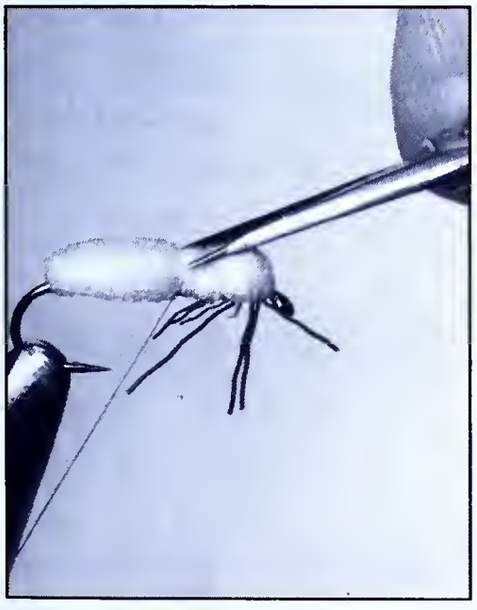
I have had the most success with the Bumblebee on woodland streams, where its initial effectiveness seems to coincide with the first warm weather of summer. But it's not strictly a hot weather pattern. It continues to draw the attention of trout well into the crisp days of late September and October. That's a wonderful time to be on the stream—when the gaudy spawning colors of wild trout match the fiery hue of the leaves.

The Bumblebee does not alight on the water with the gentle delicacy of a typical hackled dry fly. It arrives with a distinct *splat*, but not to worry. That's the way real bees reach the water, and often trout are drawn to the commotion.

Fish the pattern as you would other terrestrials—along undercut banks and other obvious cover. But don't hesitate to activate it with a fluttering retrieve by vibrating the rod hand. That's the way bees behave on the water, and the disturbance may elicit a smashing response. In fact, if you know the location of a large trout, repeated fluttering retrieves over or alongside the lair may push the brute over the edge.

Dressing: Bumblebee

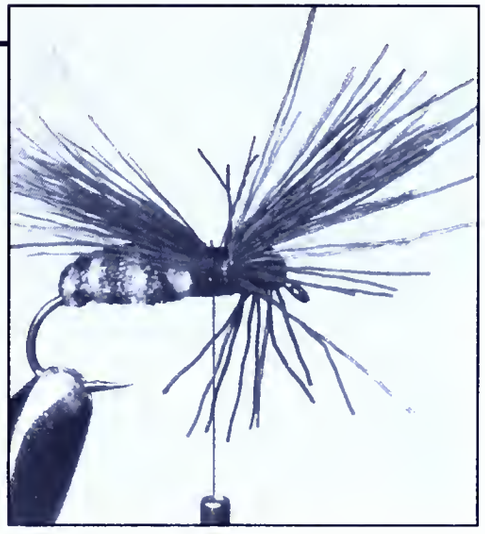
Hook: Size 10 to 14, dry fly style.
Thread: Yellow 6/0 prewaxed and black 6/0 prewaxed.
Body: 1/4-inch x 1/8-inch strip of Evasote tinted yellow.
Legs: Moose mane hairs.
Wings: Natural deer hair.



4 Fold back the free end of the foam and tie it off behind the legs, forming a large head. Trim the excess foam as shown. Half-hitch the thread three times behind the legs and cut off the thread. Lacquer the half-hitches.



5 Remove the fly from the vise. With a black marking pen tint the head and make stripes around the body.



6 Re-place the fly in the vise and tie in black thread behind the eye. Wrap over the yellow thread windings to the fore end of the body. Tie in a fairly sparse wing of hair behind the head. Trim the butts and wind over them. Then bring the thread under the head and whip-finish behind the eye. Apply lacquer to finish the winds and other exposed windings.

Ice Action for Pocono Pickerel

by George Smith

Chain pickerel are voracious. They feed on bait-sized fish with a passion. Some anglers consider them ungainly, but others pursue these toothy, long-snouted marauders with an enthusiasm often reserved for prized trout or salmon. At the very least, they are one of the most effective predatory gamefish that can be taken readily from beneath ice-covered waters.

Pickerel occur throughout the Commonwealth, but in northeastern Pennsylvania they are decidedly prolific. In some areas of the Poconos they infest shallower impoundments. Fight a hefty pickerel with wet, half-frozen hands—then struggle to yank its slippery, thrashing body up through a 10-inch hole in the ice—and you will become a converted fan of these powerful gamefish.

Despite the sport they provide, some ice anglers simply don't like them. For these anglers the pickerel's teeth, fierce demeanor and bony flesh have little appeal. Others openly hate them. Use a small minnow to jig exclusively for perch or other panfish in pickerel-plagued waters and the monstrous feeders will readily snatch baits and shred lines. Usually, a pickerel's razor-sharp teeth sever light monofilament intended for smaller fish.

Yes, the sleek, duck-billed battlers can be pests. But their size and canny ability to break free from hooks and lines make them worthy of any angler's attention. And their flesh, which is at its best during the winter months, can be deboned and made into tasty fish patties.

The Fish and Boat Commission knows that pickerel commonly exceed 20 inches. That's why a size minimum of 15 inches has been placed on these fish. During the prime ice fishing months, December through early March, the creel limit is three pickerel per day. It may be something of a distinction to land a fish in the 15- or 20-inch range that weighs four or five pounds, but it's not uncommon to find pickerel that are larger and heavier. The state record pickerel, taken from Minsi Lake in Northampton County in 1991, tipped the scales at 8 pounds, 2 ounces. That's an impressive chain pickerel. The world record fish weighs in at 9 pounds, 6 ounces, according to the International Game Fish Association. It was taken in Georgia in February of 1961. Note that it was caught during the winter. It's possible that a world-record pickerel could come from Northeastern Pennsylvania's waters. Brady's Lake, Shohola Dam or Lake Wallenpaupack might just give up such a fish to a diligent ice angler.

In the summer months pickerel can be caught with flashy spoons from shallow, weedy waterways that harbor a dependable population of forage fish. But in winter, when ice cloaks the waters, minnows and shiners are the preferred baits. Ice fishing for pickerel is not difficult. Anyone can use a three-inch shiner to attract them with a jigging rod or tip-up. Simply attach the shiner to a jig and suspend the bait above the bottom, weed line or rocky structure. Use a spinning or baitcasting reel spooled with at least 6-pound test, and make sure the reel's drag is set properly. Forget whippy jigging rods because you need something with a little backbone to control these fighters. Try a jigging rod with a medium action that's at least 24 inches in length.

Tip-ups are fine for catching pickerel, but make sure the 18-inch length of monofilament leader knotted to the braided line is weighted so the bait does not swim too far up from the bottom or weed line. Use a size 4 or 6 hook.

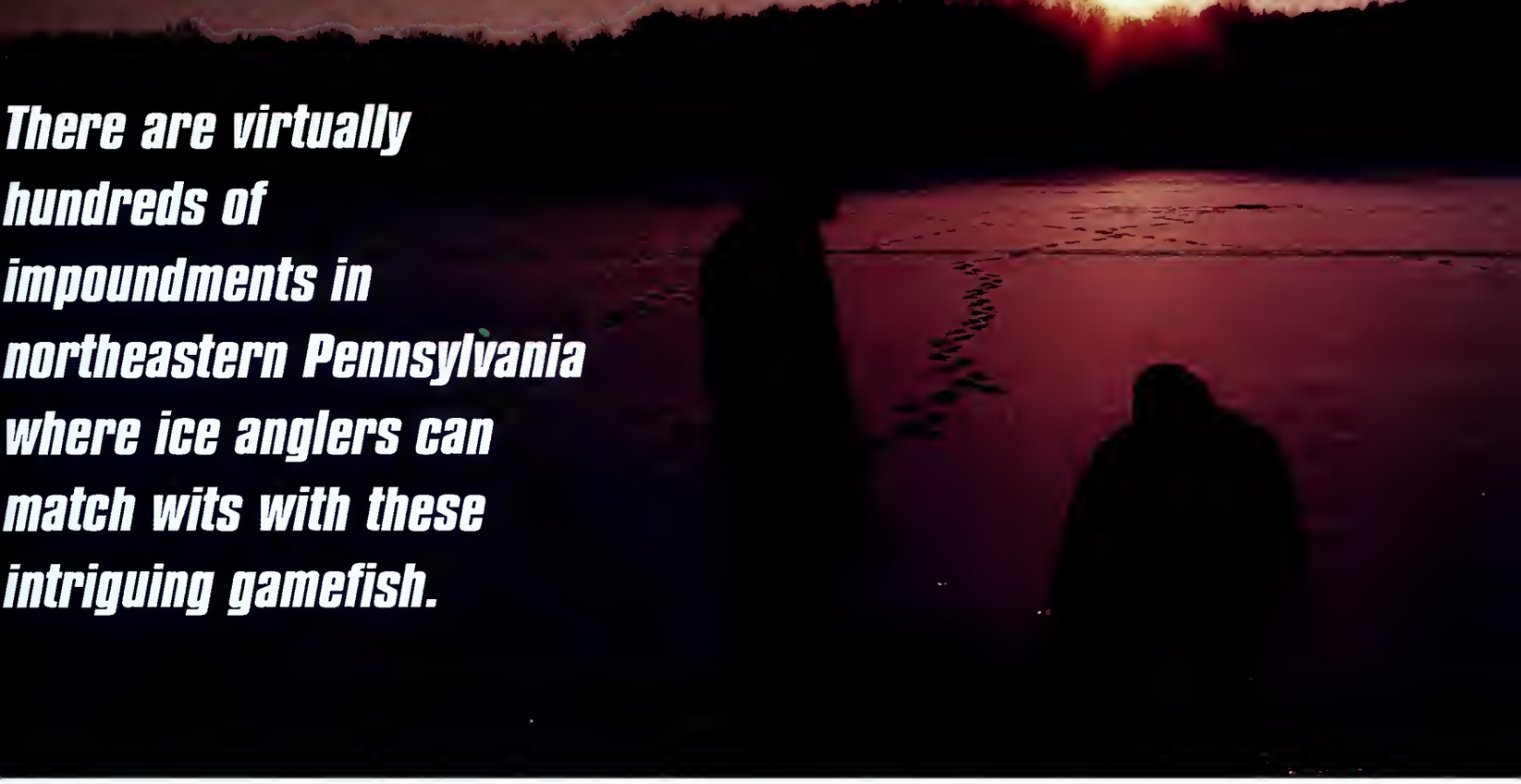
Considering their abundance, hooking pickerel may not be difficult. Getting them out of the water and on the ice is another matter. Certainly, landing these fish often calls for an uncomfortable compromise. Use heavy line or steel leaders as a defense against the fish's whetted teeth and the lively action of baitfish will be deterred. Wary pickerel may refuse such offerings. Make use of thin monofilament that encourages baits to flash about and pickerel will sever the line as readily as a razor. Then there is the size factor. A big pickerel fighting some unseen thing pulling at its jaw does not rise willingly through the ice. Include the stress and excitement of watching a long, sleek, agitated fish streak madly under a 10-inch hole in the hard water and the battle could very well result in the toothy predator making a speedy escape to the lake bottom.

Plenty of challenges arise when pursuing pickerel, but finding a place to fish for them poses little difficulty. There are virtually hundreds of impoundments in northeastern Pennsylvania where ice anglers can match wits with these intriguing gamefish. It seems that chain pickerel are firmly established in Pocono waters. It is possible to take a pickerel from almost any impoundment in northeastern Pennsylvania, but these fish are more abundant in some waters than others.

Start searching for pickerel at 229-acre Brady's Lake near Blakeslee in Monroe County. Access Brady's off Route 940, just east of the intersection of routes 115 and 940. Brady's is shallow, weedy and has plenty of panfish on which pickerel thrive. There is a three-mile paved access road that is not maintained during the winter months, so a four-wheel-drive vehicle is recommended when fishing this remote impoundment surrounded by State Game Lands 127.

Tobyhanna Lake, also in Monroe County, holds a fine population of pickerel. At 170 acres, the lake near Tobyhanna State Park is not as large as Brady's, but anglers have reported fine catches. Follow Route 423 northeast from the town of Tobyhanna to reach the lake.

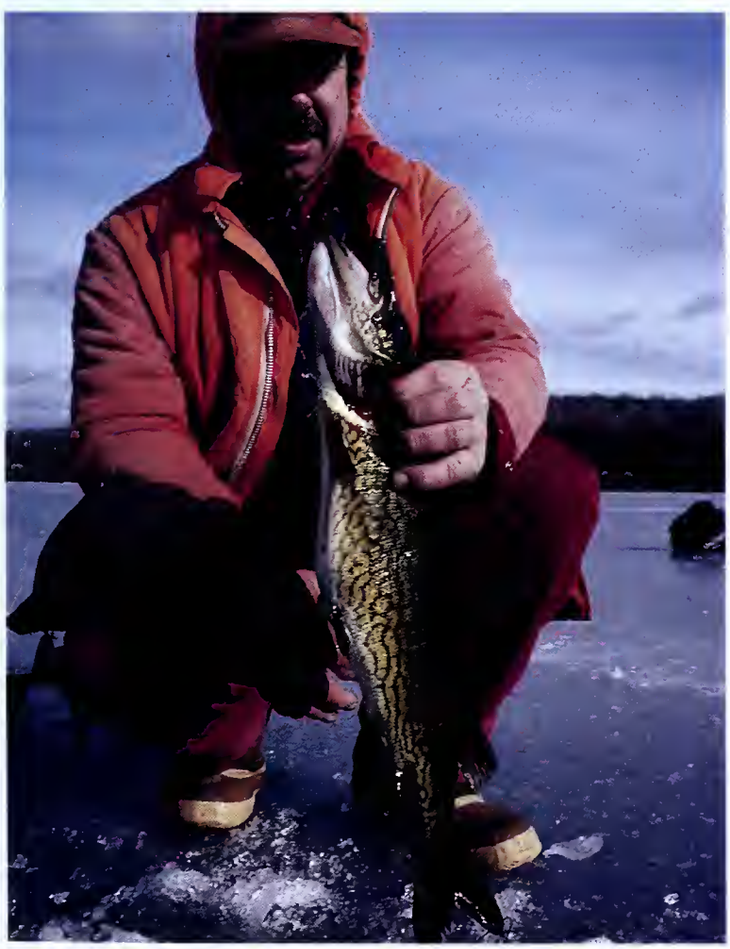
Gouldsboro Lake is another northeastern Pennsylvania waterway adjacent to a state park. Gouldsboro used to be known



There are virtually hundreds of impoundments in northeastern Pennsylvania where ice anglers can match wits with these intriguing gamefish.

for its perch. Now it has become a pickerel hotspot. To reach the lake, which spans the Monroe and Wayne County line, follow Route 507 east off I-380.

Pike County has plenty of fine pickerel water. Shohola Dam, at 1,135 acres, holds a combination of elements that could produce a record fish. The dam is shallow, there are lots of weeds and woody structure, and there is a solid population of forage fish. Follow Route 6 to the village of Shohola Falls to reach this impoundment, located within State Game Lands 180. Shohola Creek meanders through the dam, so locate the creek's channel to find fast action.



photos George Smith

White Deer Lake, the upper and lower lakes at Promised Land State Park, and Peck's Pond are also located in Pike County, and they all hold pickerel. White Deer Lake, within the Delaware State Forest, is small at just 49 acres, but it produces pickerel. Access the lake off Route 402, south of Route 6 and north of I-84.

There are two lakes at Promised Land State Park. The "upper" lake is the larger at 422 acres. The "lower" lake covers 173 acres. The upper lake is the most productive. To reach these waters, follow Route 390 south of Interstate 84.

Peck's Pond is a well-known pickerel hotspot. It's shallow and weedy and its 300 acres are teeming with fish. Follow Route 402 south of I-84, or north of Route 209, to locate the water.

The Pike and Wayne County line runs right through giant Lake Wallenpaupack. At 5,700 acres, this is the Pocono area's "big one." There is plenty of access between the towns of Ledgedale to the south, and Hawley to the north. Pick up a map of Wallenpaupack at the visitor's center located on Route 6, 1/2-mile from the intersection of routes 6 and 507. Fishing can be productive anywhere on the lake, but good pickerel catches are constantly reported near the dam at Hawley.

In Wayne County, try 225-acre White Oak Pond, 280-acre Prompton Reservoir or 122-acre Duck Harbor Pond. Follow Route 296 north from Waymart to reach White Oak Pond. Fish the weedbeds to catch the biggest fish.

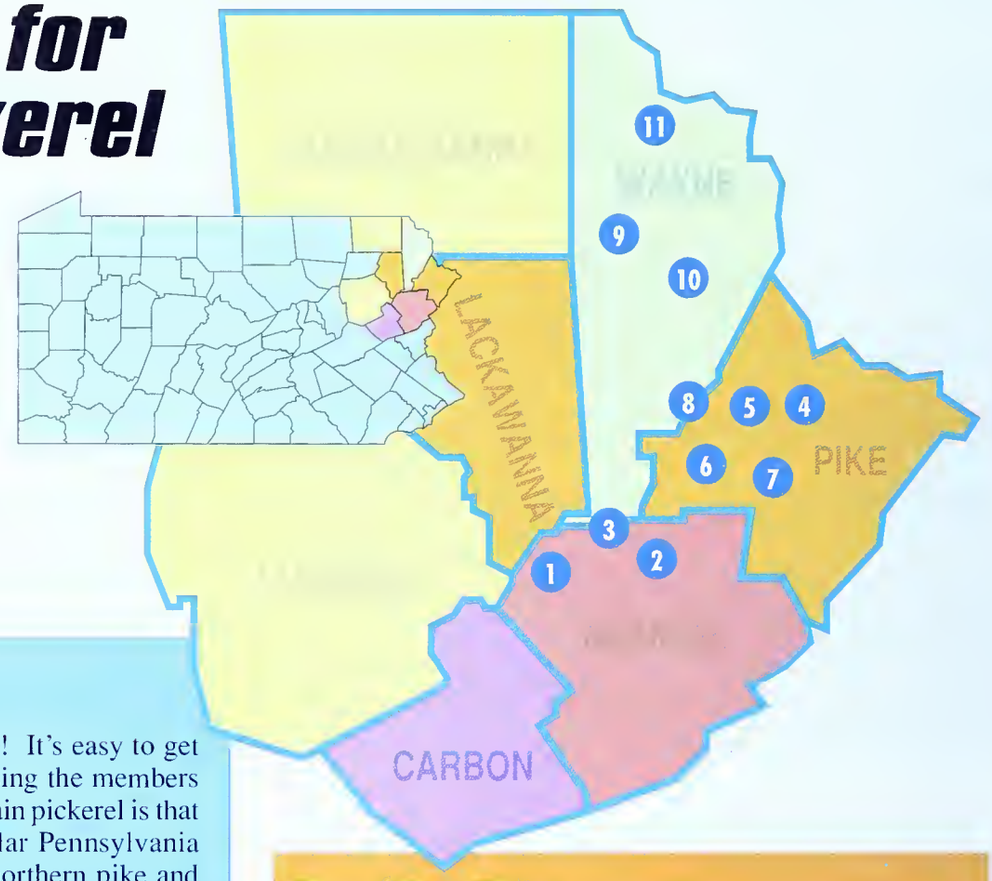
Prompton Dam is located on Route 170, off Route 6, west of Honesdale. The Army Corps of Engineers impoundment is longer than it is wide, and the best pickerel fishing is found along the east side of the lake.

Duck Harbor Pond is located about 13 miles north of Honesdale off Route 191.

There are many other northeastern Pennsylvania waterways that hold pickerel. Find promising water, make certain the ice is safe, and then head out with tip-ups, jigging rods and live baits. The pickerel will be present and plentiful, and there's little chance of disappointment if these voracious gamefish are on the feed.

Ice Action for Pocono Pickerel

1. Brady's Lake
2. Tobyhanna Lake
3. Gouldsboro Lake
4. Shohola Lake
5. White Deer Lake
6. Promised Land Lakes
7. Peck's Pond
8. Lake Wallenpaupack
9. White Oak Pond
10. Prompton Dam
11. Duck Harbor Pond



The Pike Family

If you're fishing for pickerel, beware! It's easy to get on the wrong side of the law by confusing the members of the pike family. The problem with chain pickerel is that they closely resemble two other popular Pennsylvania gamefish and pike family members—northern pike and muskellunge.

All three species are long, sleek, toothy and have duckbill snouts. The three body types are almost identical in silhouette, which adds to the problem of identification. Many northeastern Pennsylvania waterways hold muskies. Some hold northern pike. If you catch a "pickerel" anywhere in the Northeast, make sure it can be positively identified as such.

There are two relatively easy ways to identify the fish. Check the cheeks and gill covers, and the large pores under the jaw. To be absolutely sure you are not confusing chain pickerel with any other member of the pike family, look at the scales on the cheeks and gill covers. Chain pickerel have fully scaled cheeks and gill covers.

Northern pike have no scales on the bottom half of the gill covers, but have fully scaled cheeks. Muskies have no scales on the bottom half of the cheek or gill covers. Then look at the pores in the underside of the jaw.

Chain pickerel have three to five pores. Both northern pike and muskies have five or more pores. It's best to check the cheeks for scales and jaws for pores to make a positive identification whenever a pike family member is going to be creeled. Never rely on first impressions.

When anglers gain some experience catching the three species, it becomes easy to make a positive identification based on body markings. Pickerel have an obvious dark, chain-like pattern on their sides and a heavy, dark "tear" that flows from the eye to beneath the mouth line. Northern pike have yellow or whitish bean-shaped spots running horizontally on their bodies. Muskellunge have dark splotches or bars running vertically on their sides.

Make no mistake when it comes to the pike family. The size limit on pickerel is 15 inches; northern pike, 24 inches; muskellunge, 30 inches.—*GS*.

Redfin Pickerel or Chain Pickerel?

Chain pickerel are a major attraction in northeastern Pennsylvania, but they share their waters with redfin pickerel. Because redfins seldom exceed 12 inches, they are not considered to be gamefish. Found only east of the Allegheny Mountains, redfins are most commonly caught in the Delaware River watershed.



These smaller pickerel may cause some confusion among anglers because redfins are often thought to be young but odd-looking chain pickerel, northern pike or even muskellunge with a pronounced red tint to their fins and tail. There's one sure-fire way to determine if you have caught a redfin: Count the branchiostegal rays, or the series of bones supporting the gill membranes under the head. Chain pickerel have 14 to 16 rays on each side; the redfins have 11 to 13. The legal size limit on pickerel is 15 inches, so redfins rarely qualify for the creel. But they do make interesting catch-and-release fishing on light tackle and offer a unique little bonus for northeastern Pennsylvania ice anglers.—*GS*.

illustrations- Tom Duran; map graphics- Ted Walke

Codorus Creek

by Seth P. Cassell

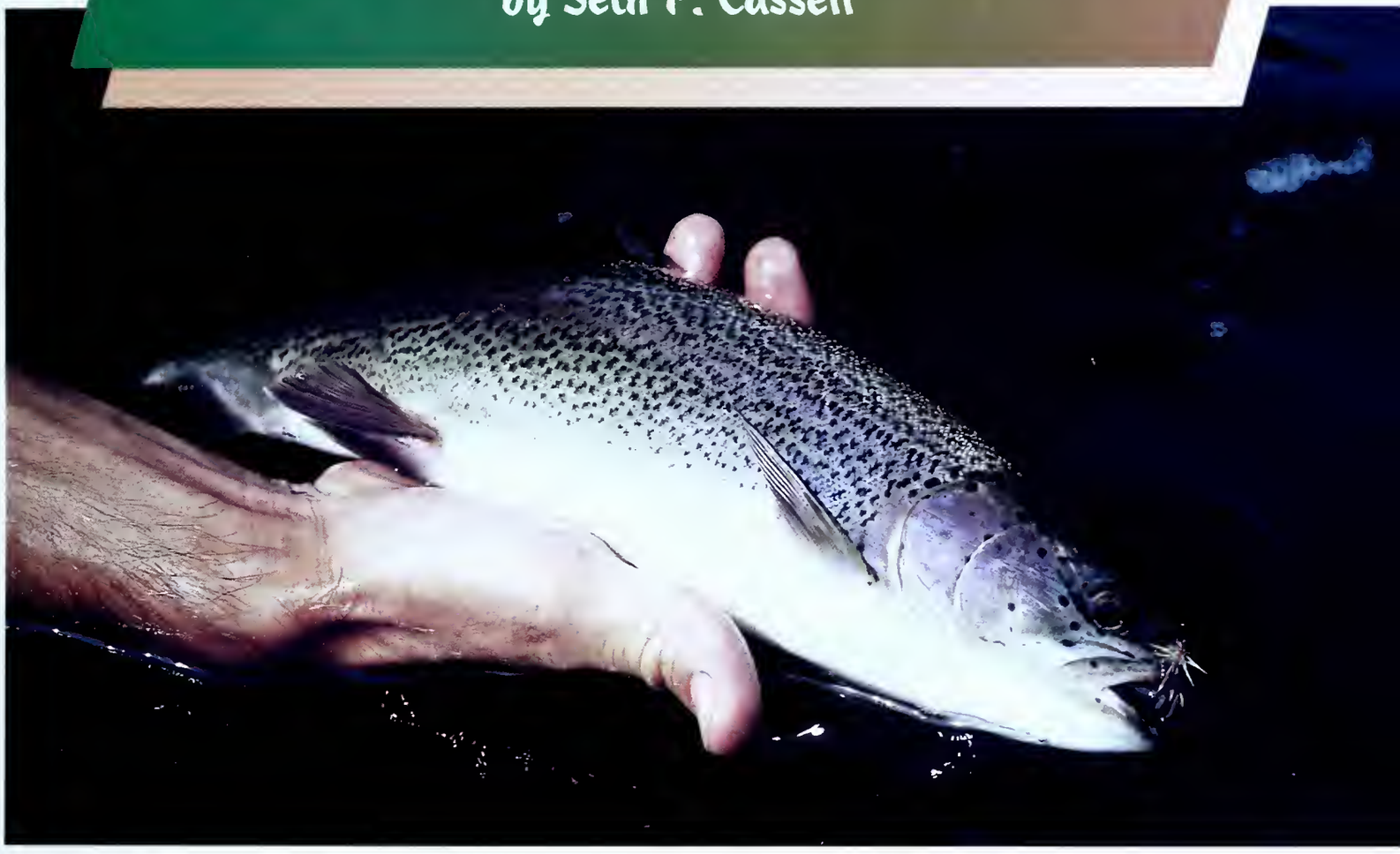


photo-Ed Jaworski

My initial impression of Codorus Creek was not one of great enthusiasm as I got my first glimpse of this southern Pennsylvania trout stream from my truck window. "This looks like more suitable habitat for smallmouth bass," I thought, as I noticed its elongated pools and slow-moving water. A friend insisted I try this stream for some good early season fly fishing, so I continued on until I reached the delayed-harvest area.

On the water by noon, I began tossing weighted nymphs into the tail end of a deep pool, and I slowly worked my way to the head. I fished my nymph low and slow, covering each likely spot with several casts. I fishing this way for an hour without any luck, so I began to wonder where all the trout were that my friend had raved about.

Finally, around 1:30, I witnessed a batch of Hendricksons emerging. Within minutes, rise forms scattered all across the surface, and I even had a few juveniles feeding within a few feet of my chest waders. I knotted on a Hendrickson imitation and began to cast. The events that followed were enough to convince me to return to this stream many times throughout the year.

Located in southern York County, Codorus Creek offers some of the best trout fishing in the area. Codorus Creek is easily accessible by using I-83. Get off at exit 10, the Route 30 west exit. Follow Route 30 through the city of York until you reach Route 116. Route 116 west leads through the town of Spring Grove, toward the creek and to the delayed-harvest area. If you wish to fish the lower end of the special regulations area, after you cross the creek on Route 116, the Winibrenner access point is on the left and anglers are permitted to park there. There is a very deep hole upstream from this access point that holds a good number of trout.

For those anglers who desire to fish the middle to upper stretch of the special regulations area, follow Route 116 about a mile or so farther and turn left on Iron Ridge Road (S.R. 3047). Follow this road for a mile to the town of Porter Sideling and turn left on Porters Road. This road leads to a bridge where there is a parking area that allows you access to the mid-section of the delayed-harvest area. There is a variety of water on this stretch along with some deep holes and pockets.

Codorus Creek offers some of the best trout fishing in the area, and it's easily accessible by using I-83.

Codorus Creek



If you plan to use bait, a nightcrawler bounced along the bottom induces strikes. Minnows also work well when fished close to the bottom in one of the numerous deep holes and pools.

If you desire to fish the upper end of the special regulations area or farther upstream, when you reach Porters Sideling, continue straight on Kraft Mill Road (S.R. 3047). Kraft Mill Road leads you along the creek to several access points.

Codorus Creek originates southeast of Glenville and flows north toward Lake Marburg where it meets the West Branch. The Fish and Boat Commission provides annual plantings of trout 3.5 miles above the junction of the West Branch and Codorus Creek. This stretch provides productive fishing during the early portion of the season. However, once summer rolls around and the water warms, the trout abandon this area in search of cool water.

The bottom-release dam at Lake Marburg discharges into the West Branch, which eventually flows into Codorus Creek. The water released by the dam ensures that the water of Codorus Creek stays cool and provides excellent holding water for wild and stocked trout all summer long. The Commission also stocks trout a half-mile below the West Branch to S.R. 3047 (Kraft Mill Road). Normal regulations apply in this area.

Delayed-harvest area

The delayed-harvest area runs 3.3 miles from S.R. 3047 downstream to Route 116. This area offers the best opportunity for trout fishing. Only flies and artificial lures are permitted on this stretch, and fishing is permitted only from one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset. Three trout at nine inches may be taken daily in this stretch from June 15 until the last day of February. Fishing is permitted year-round.

Fishing remains good throughout the season from Route 116 downstream to Menges Mills, and stretch that is also stocked by the Commission. Statewide regulations apply.

If you want to fish around Menges Mills, turn right on Mill Road after crossing the creek on Route 116 (near the Winibrenner access point). Mill Road leads you toward Menges Mills. Once in Menges Mills, there is a bridge crossing Codorus Creek where parking is available. A mixed stocked and wild brown trout population extends nearly as far downstream as Spring Grove, but below Spring Grove, Codorus Creek offers little attraction for trout anglers.

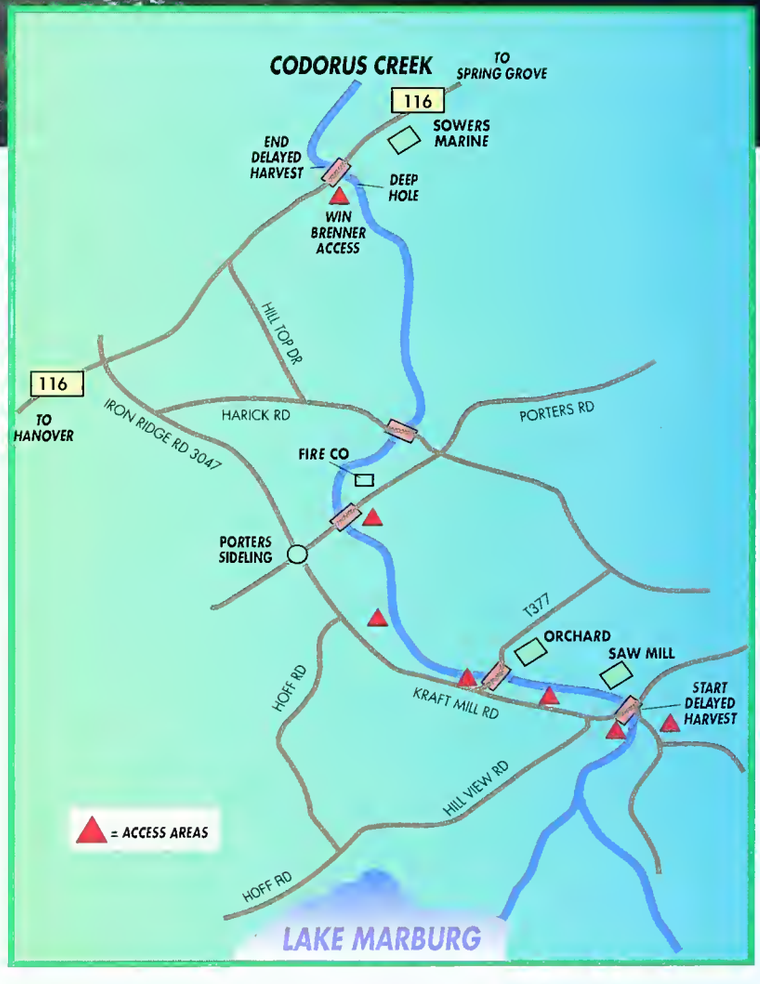


photo-Seth P. Cassell; map graphics- Ted Walke

A good rule of thumb is to wear chest waders and carry a wading staff when fishing Codorus Creek. If the creek is high, as it usually is during spring, there could be some deep holes in the creek that could be above head level.

I once fished Codorus Creek in mid-August after a day of rain. I assumed the creek would still be relatively low, so I opted to bring only my hip boots. When I arrived at the creek, I was greeted by high, discolored water that could be fished effectively only with chest waders.

Improving fishery

I once ran into a group of spin-fishermen on Codorus Creek who agreed that the fishing has improved drastically since the implementation of the special regulations. They said they have been catching more holdovers and wild trout than before. Indeed this is good news, but there is even better news on the horizon.

Commission Area Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann says, "Survey work done in the early 1980s on Codorus Creek documented a population of naturally reproducing brown trout. More recent surveys indicate that wild brown trout have blossomed from a small population to a Class A population within the delayed-harvest area."

Kaufmann adds that there might even be a small population of naturally reproducing rainbow trout in Codorus Creek. "With these recent findings," Kaufmann says, "it is highly probable that the delayed-harvest area will be designated 'wild trout water' in the future." Stocking of the delayed-harvest area will be discontinued this year, and its wild trout population will be monitored for a response.

In addition to the delayed-harvest area, Kaufmann says that it is possible that the section below Route 116 to Menges Mills, presently a put-and-take stretch, will also have the capabilities of achieving the "wild trout water" designation.

Spring tactics

For those anglers who wish to fish Codorus Creek in the spring, be prepared to encounter high and discolored water. If you are a fly fisherman, your best bet is to fish weighted nymphs. Black nymphs produce well because Codorus Creek is usually discolored in the spring, and the trout seem to be able to see them better than brown or olive nymphs.

Make sure you add enough weight to your fly to get it near the bottom where most of the fish are. The "dead drift" method is by far the most productive, but don't be afraid to give your nymph an occasional twitch. This slight movement can sometimes be the determining factor in whether the trout strikes or not.

When you fish the slow-moving pools common to this creek, detecting strikes can be difficult. So I almost always use a strike indicator.

When the Hendricksons and other plentiful hatches arrive on Codorus Creek, the trout still actively feed on nymphs even when some trout are rising. A standard Hendrickson nymph or a dark Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear works well to imitate the mayfly nymphs. The standard "dead drift" presentation method may not be as productive in this situation. Remember, you want to imitate an active mayfly nymph that is swimming around and preparing to emerge. Therefore, the "across and down" method works best. Just cast across the creek and let the fly drift downstream, mending your line when necessary. Be ready, because you can get some hard hits using this method.

Streamers can also be effective when fishing "across and down." Make sure you give the fly enough action to make it look like a live minnow.

When the days are slow at Codorus Creek, the water is cold, and no other methods produce, the Wooly Bugger comes through. They work well in black, yellow and white. Shenk's White Minnow also produces in the cloudy water of spring.

Work your streamers slowly, giving them only a few enticing twitches. The cold water in the spring makes the trout less willing to expend energy for your offering, so a quick retrieve is impractical and rarely produces.

Dry fly action

If you love taking trout on dry flies as I do, try tossing a large attractor pattern in sizes 10 or 12. A good attractor pattern is a Humpy tied with an orange or red body. Royal Wulffs and Light Cahills also work well.

Codorus Creek is usually discolored in spring, so stay away from using dry flies with brown or dull colors. Use ones that the trout can easily spot when drifting with the current. Although it is likely you tempt a few trout using dry flies, fishing nymphs is still generally more productive.

During spring, the fly fisher can find some decent hatches. Hendricksons can be found in good numbers from mid-April to late April, then followed by March Browns, Gray Foxes, and Sulphurs as the season progresses and the water warms.

Spinfishing, baitfishing

Spin-fishermen can also enjoy success by fishing their lures in deep holes and pockets. You won't have to look hard to find these spots. There is a deep hole or pocket almost every hundred yards or so, or where the creek makes a sharp bend creating a deep gorge on the far bank. I once saw a fisherman catch a half-dozen trout out of the same pocket simply by fishing his lure low and slow.

Early spring also provides a good chance of success for bait fishermen on Codorus Creek. If you plan to use bait, a nightcrawler bounced along the bottom induces strikes. Freshly stocked trout also fall victim to a properly presented piece of cheese, marshmallow or other standard bait offering. Minnows also work well when fished close to the bottom in one of the numerous deep holes and pools.

Although the trout may tolerate sloppy wading and casting in the high water, when the water becomes low and clear, the trout seldom tolerate these angling errors. Codorus Creek can be tricky fishing when the water level drops. On most other streams when this happens, I usually fish from the stream bank. However, there are many places in Codorus Creek where the banks are so grown up and thick, it is virtually impossible to fish from them.

In this situation, crouch down and wade to likely holding areas as slowly and quietly as you can. Be sure not to splash around or shuffle around any rocks because wary trout can easily detect these vibrations. Cast accurately and delicately—one small error can send the trout scurrying into the next county. Light tackle is a definite help in low, clear conditions with wary trout.

No matter how the conditions fare at Codorus Creek, I am always pleased to fish this gem of a stream. I believe its diversity and unpredictability are the reasons why I keep going back. Codorus Creek is not just another place to go fishing, but a stream that has, through proper management, upgraded from a put-and-take fishery to one that now offers Class A wild trout fishing just outside the city of York.

Northcentral ICE GEMS

by Mike Bleech

Ice has been hard to find during the past few winters. Last winter I grew eager for some serious ice fishing. But after a short blast of early frigid weather, the weather again turned warm, melting the ice near home.

If I were going to find ice, I figured, it would have to be in the cold Allegheny Highlands of the northcentral counties. So I set out on a tour of some of the best ice fishing lakes and ponds in this relatively remote part of the state, concentrating on those stocked with trout. I stuck with the lakes stocked with trout because when fishing unfamiliar waters it is comforting to be confident that the lake holds plenty of catchable fish.

This is a journal of that excursion.

Bradford Reservoir #3

It is a pretty little lake, I thought, as we walked across the ice to the opposite side from Route 346. Bradford Reservoir #3, also called Marilla Lake, is surrounded by spruces and pines. Their deep greens stood out against the fresh white covering of ice. Toward the back, about where we planned to drill our first hole, coyote tracks crossed straight over the ice. Already I loved this lake.

Dave Baker, a friend from nearby Bradford, guided Worth Hammond and me on this outing. Trout were our main target, but this lake, Dave explained, also holds smallish crappies, yellow perch that sometimes are longer than 10 inches, and smallmouth bass.

For the first few hours we swapped stories among ourselves and with other anglers we met on the ice. One of them, Daniel Baney, another Bradford angler, talked about a 24-inch, 8-pound rainbow trout he had caught there last April, casting a C.P. Swing from shore. He commented on its pink flesh. He believes rainbows spawn in the watershed.

About noon we had a brief flurry of activity. Dave pulled several foot-long brook trout and a beautifully marked rainbow trout onto the ice. Did those trout prefer the maggots on our rigs or the other baits we used, or were they just in the right place at the right time? It is hard to say, because those trout were the only ones we caught during the four hours we were on the ice.

On our way off the ice we passed another angler who had arrived several hours after we did. His fishing had been fruitless that morning, but he said it had been excellent all through the week before.

"Should have been here last week." Yeah, I've heard that before!

Ridgway Reservoir

Don't let your tires slip off the narrow, winding road that leads downhill to Ridgway Reservoir, because the ditches are deep.

"It'll make me feel a lot better if there were a few other anglers on the ice here," I said to Worth.

"I don't see any fresh tracks in the road," he said.

Those words were barely out of his mouth when we rounded a bend and got our first look at the reservoir. Nearly every available parking space was full. I figured a few hundred ice anglers were packed onto the 75-acre impoundment. Our first visit to this water coincided with the annual Island Run Sportsmen's Club ice fishing tournament.

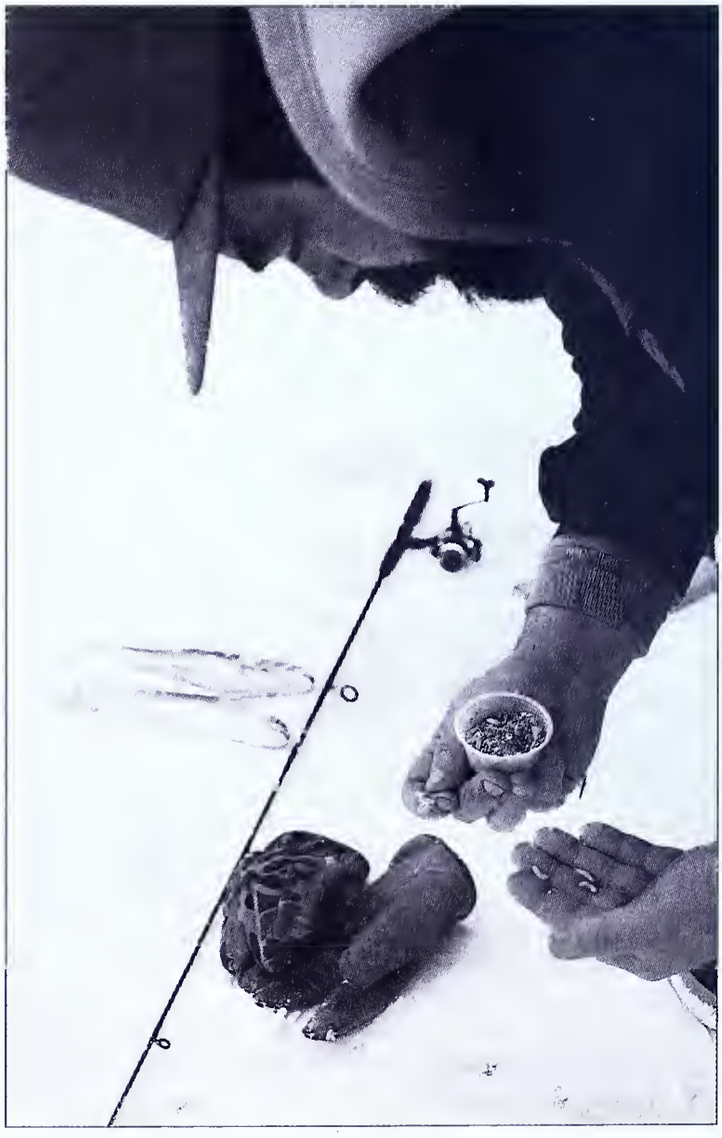


photo-Mike Bleech



photo-Mike Bleech

As Worth and I looked about for a place to park the brown van, ominous clouds rolled by. Heavy rain started to fall just as we were putting on our warm clothing. We scrambled back into the van.

When it became apparent that this might be an all-day rain, we put on our rain gear. That's a big advantage of the van—being able to carry contingency gear.

We stopped at the tournament headquarters, in a pick-up truck cap, to ask a few questions. The weighmasters, John Sharrow and Tom Kilhoffer, were happy to oblige. John is president of the Island Run Sportsmen's Club. The club operates a trout nursery. Tom is the nursery manager.

The tournament is one of the club fund raising events. They require about $3,300 each year to raise about 14,000 trout.

"It's the way we stay alive," John said. "We take whatever money we make and put it back into the fish."

Instead of fishing, Worth and I decided to walk around the ice to see how everyone was faring, and to snoop for any interesting ice fishing gear.

"There are so many hooks in the water, a fish would have a hard time not getting hooked if it just moved," Worth said.

Nevertheless, fishing had been slow that morning. The biggest fish we saw on the ice was a 14-inch bass. Some brook trout were almost that large. This lake also holds yellow perch and crappies, but we saw none of them. Occasionally some big perch and largemouth bass are taken, we were told.

Laurel Run Reservoir

Rather than join the crowd at Ridgway Reservoir, where the fishing was slow, we decided to drive the short distance to Laurel Run Reservoir, which is between Ridgeway and St. Marys. One car was in the parking lot when we arrived, and the lone ice fisherman from that car was just leaving. He had caught one trout, missed several others, and said a group of anglers who were there earlier had done very well. He was just leaving to get some dry clothes and his rain gear.

Armed with more enthusiasm that we had when we left Ridgeway Reservoir, we walked around the lake until we came to a small runoff ditch.

"This ought to attract trout," Worth said.

Cautious not to get too close to the runoff water, which might have weakened the ice, Worth drilled a hole and set a rod baited with a small shiner.

Just as he stood up, his tiny bobber disappeared underwater. He set the hook, and soon our first trout of the day was flopping on the ice.

Fishing was not as fast as that quick start might have suggested. Still, we caught eight or ten trout, many small yellow perch, and missed many more of both. We were impressed with how much life there was in the lake. Of the dozens of old holes we tried, we had hits in most.

Boats are not allowed on Laurel Run Reservoir. The only way to fish its 100 acres during summer is from shore. So ice fishing is the only way to fish most of it.

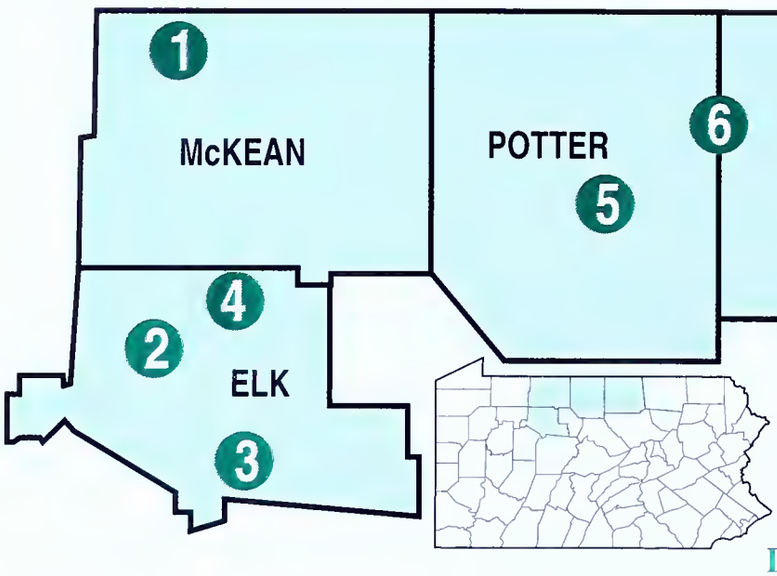
"I'll bet some fish die of old age here," Worth said.

Indeed, an angler we met later said that a 30-inch brown trout had been caught there the year before. Once a trout grows large enough to eat the multitude of 3-inch to 5-inch perch, it could grow fast. We decided this lake deserves at least one annual winter visit.

Late in the afternoon we left the lake for home. But first we stopped for a chicken dinner. As we were leaving the restaurant the rain was turning to snow. By the time we got to the top of the hills surrounding Ridgeway, it was a white-out, and the road was icy. Talk about your nasty weather—from downpour to blizzard!

East Branch Reservoir

No doubt winter had arrived when the gang got together at East Branch Reservoir. The temperature did not get above the low 20s. Yet, as a reminder of what kind of winter it had been, the ice was only about 4 inches thick.



Northcentral ICE GEMS

1. Bradford Reservoir #3
2. Ridgway Reservoir
3. Laurel Run Reservoir
4. East Branch Lake
5. Lyman Lake
6. Beechwood Lake

East Branch Reservoir is in northeast Elk County, crossing into McKean County when the level of this flood control reservoir is unusually high. At normal summer pool, 1,670 feet elevation, it covers 1,160 acres and is 5.7 miles long. It was drawn down to 1,651 feet during our visit, at high winter pool, with a surface area of 920 acres, 5.2 miles long. The two major access areas, at the Corps of Engineers boat launch and at Elk State Park, are at opposite ends of the lake.

The congeniality of local anglers has been one of the best parts about this quest for ice fishing in the highlands. Take the gentleman we met while he was filling the ice machine at the McFarland House, in Wilcox.

"Going ice fishing?" he asked as I walked by.

"Yes, up at East Branch Reservoir," I answered.

"I caught a 30-pound tiger musky there yesterday," he said with a smile, "47 inches long."

He generously answered my questions about the lake, directing us to the best way to get onto the ice—at the boat launch near the dam, and saving us from an unnecessarily long walk. We had planned to fish near the center of the reservoir, but he said fishing had been good right across from the boat launch, where he caught his trophy tiger. He also told us to look for lake trout—our primary target—in 80 feet of water. That tip, as it turned out, saved us a lot of time.

The big musky was the hot topic of conversation among the 30 or so ice anglers we saw on the lake. And they also agreed that we should look for lake trout 80 feet below the ice.

Worth Hammond brought his sonar, rigged in a box with a tractor battery for power. Joe Morrison brought his power auger. These two tools made it a simple matter to get into the deep water that all the local anglers suggested, and to try other depths, too.

After a few hours without a flag, Dave Baker and I decided to try even deeper water. Finally, our first flag—but I missed it. Then another flag, and at last we had a lake trout on the ice—hauled from a depth of 125 feet!

Fishing was slow. We caught just three lakers—all from 125 feet of water. But the sausage and venison Joe cooked on his small charcoal grill were outstanding. The company, in our gang and the other local anglers we met, was the best. I will log it among my most pleasant days on the ice.

Again we drove into the face of a blizzard on the way home. Couldn't we have something in between?

Lyman Lake

"Can I help you?" asked the smiling man in the uniform.

"Yes," I answered, handing him my business card. Then I explained what I was up to.

His smile took a puzzling turn, and he said, "You're not going to believe this. I'll bet you can't remember the last time you saw me."

My mind was blank. What a humbling feeling it is when someone knows you and you do not know him.

"We were burning designs into wood with nails that we heated in the old wood stove at Bimber's camp."

The man in the uniform was park superintendent Steve Farrell, whom I had not seen in about 30 years. No wonder I did not recognize him! We exchanged business cards, so now there is no excuse for not getting together soon. We made some loose plans to fish for bass and panfish this summer.

Lyman Lake, a 40-acre impoundment in Lyman Run State Park, gets liberal stockings of trout for ice fishing. But what I will remember best about it is that reunion.

Beechwood Lake

By the time Joe Morrison and I got to Beechwood Lake, a 67-acre Fish and Boat Commission impoundment in western Tioga County, the lakes around the fringes of the highlands were getting thin layers of ice, and some anglers were getting onto the bays. The other highlands lakes we fished had 4 inches to 6 inches of ice. At Beechwood we were very happy to have Joe's power auger—to drill through 14 inches of ice!

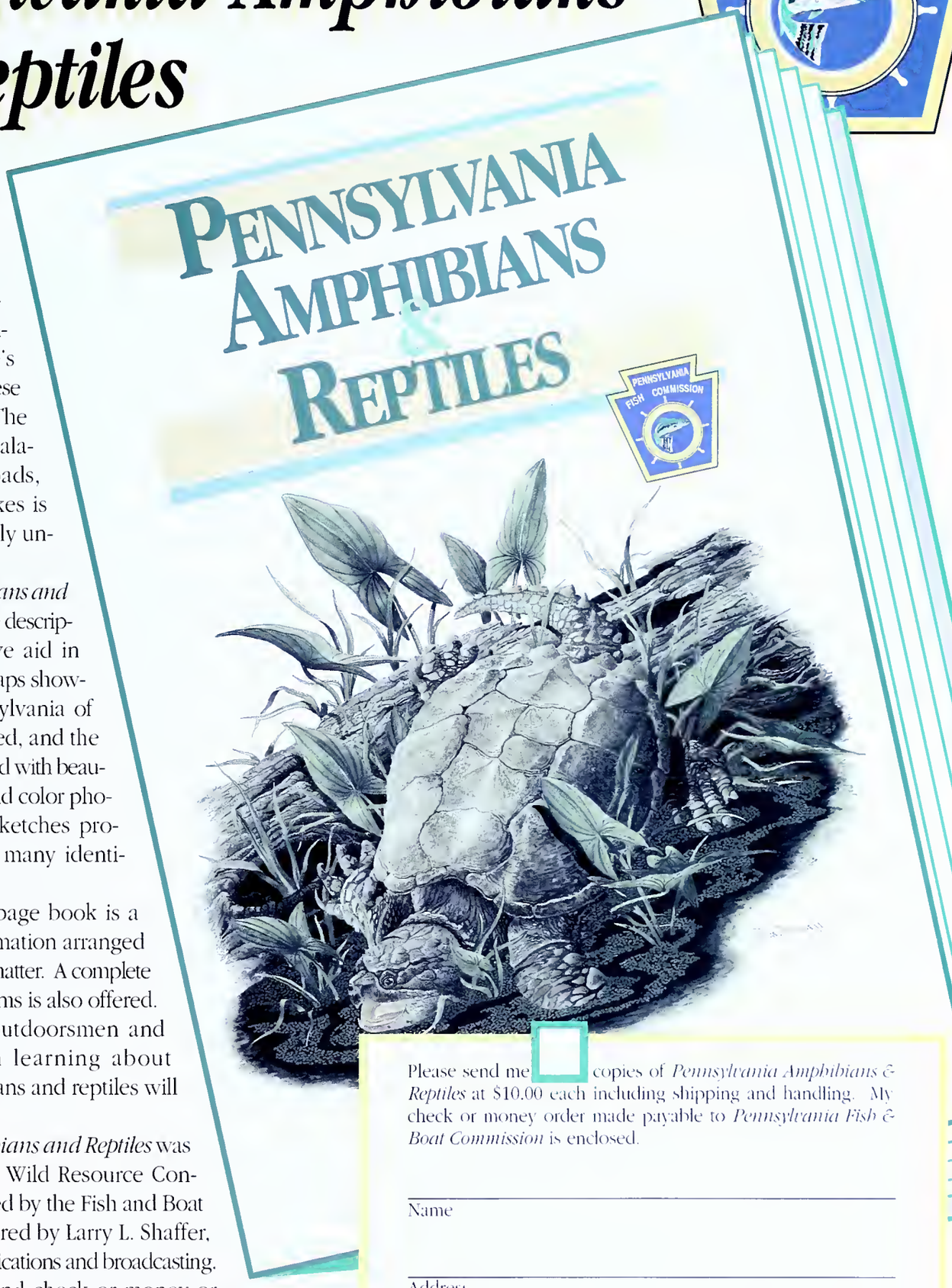
At Beechwood Lake we found that we had saved the best for last in the quest for highlands ice fishing. What a gem this little lake is! Trout eluded us and the other two anglers we met on the lake. But hardly anything else did. Between the four of us we caught crappies, bluegills, yellow perch, walleyes, largemouth bass, chain pickerel and even a couple of bullheads. What a marvelous afternoon.

My fortunes changed for the better when I switched to a yellow, red and silver teardrop jig sweetened with a maggot. The fastest action was around sunset. By then we had worked our way up the lake to where the maximum depth was about 7 feet.

The temperature took a sharp turn downward as Joe and I were completing our tour. Lakes farther south and lower in elevation were getting safe ice. Ice fishing season was getting into full swing throughout most of the state, though not until we had already enjoyed weeks of good ice fishing in the northcentral highlands.

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the Hemlock Creek Watershed

by Linda Steiner

The Hemlock Creek watershed, including Porcupine, Reese and Norway runs, is one of the very few places in Pennsylvania where anglers can fish for three kinds of wild trout—brook, brown and rainbow. Most fishermen probably have not heard about the streams of this drainage, because until less than a year ago, Hemlock Creek and its tributaries were on private, although open, land.

More than 11,000 acres of the eastern Venango County property were purchased last June by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), which intends to convey the land to the Game Commission to become part of State Game Lands 47. With continued public access to the tract and its streams ensured, now is a perfect time to get to know and fish the Hemlock Creek drainage. The opportunity to catch rare stream-born rainbow trout adds extra incentive.

The Hemlock Creek watershed is both near and remote—near because it is about 2 1/2 hours north of downtown Pittsburgh, and remote because most of the streams are accessible only by foot travel. Protecting the unique watershed and getting it into public ownership were key reasons for the WPC to purchase the property. The Pittsburgh-based group is the largest private land conservation organization in the state, with over 20,000 members. The WPC has conserved over 140,000 acres of natural lands in western Pennsylvania, nearly all of it now state park, state forest or game land.

The Hemlock Creek watershed lands were formerly part of the President Oil Company, which, like many parcels in the state's northwest, had been developed for petroleum extraction. The granddaughters of the founder, H.J. Crawford, sought to sell their holdings and negotiated with the Conservancy. As a result of the sale, said heir Elizabeth Gilger of Oil City, "All the people will be able to hunt and fish and use the land. We feel this is a fitting memorial for our grandfather." It had been past practice of the family to allow public entry, including leasing cottage sites. Visitors will still encounter private cabins along some stream areas, although the rest of the tract is uninhabited.





Most fishermen probably have not heard about the streams of this drainage, because until less than a year ago, Hemlock Creek and its tributaries were on private, although open, land.

The four significant streams on the property, Hemlock Creek, Porcupine Run, Reese Run, and Norway Run, are all quality trout waters. Included on the property are five miles of Hemlock Creek, more than 3 1/2 miles of Porcupine, 2 1/2 miles of Reese Run, and about a half-mile of Norway Run.

Hemlock Creek

Hemlock Creek enters the Allegheny River east of Oil City and just south of the village of President. It is a medium-size stream at its mouth, with a good riffle to pool ratio. Hemlock is a moderately productive creek, according to Ron Lee, Commission Area Fisheries Manager based at Tionesta. Hemlock is the only stream in the watershed still receiving hatchery trout—one stocking of browns preseason and one inseason. The fish are placed at two stops south of Route 62 and at the stream's confluence with Porcupine Run.

"Hemlock has some quality-size browns in the downstream section," says Lee, "while upstream it's a high-quality wild trout fishery, producing streambred brooks, browns and rainbows." Some huge brown trout are occasionally caught in the lower end of Hemlock, most likely those that run upstream from the Allegheny River.

Hemlock Creek is accessible from SR 2023, McCrea Schoolhouse Road. Most of the creek requires walking, either along the streambed or by hiking a gas line to the section near the confluence with Reese Run. The whole area on a topographic map is invitingly "green," and densely wooded, and as such a guide is recommended.

Porcupine, Norway runs

Porcupine Run is entirely walk-in only, as is its small tributary, Norway Run. Although Porcupine has some browns and brooks, its trout are mainly wild rainbows. "There are not big numbers of big rainbows," Lee cautions. Rather, these fish should be appreciated for their uniqueness. Catch-and-release fishing is appropriate, though not required here.

Porcupine was stocked with hatchery trout from 1953 to 1982, and received Class A Wild Trout Stream status in 1983. As such, its excellent naturally reproducing rainbow trout were recognized and protected by removing the stream from the stocking list. Wild rainbows were recorded at least as early as 1953 in Porcupine Run and have been reconfirmed in subsequent samplings.

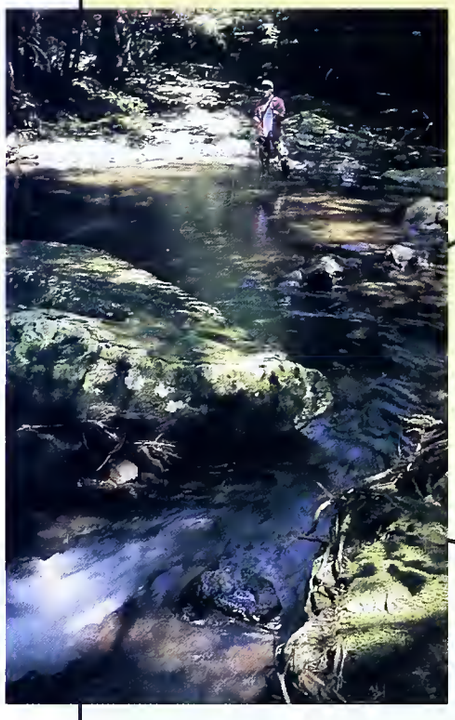


photos-Linda Steiner

Reese Run

The other "major" tributary of Hemlock Creek is Reese Run. This small creek also includes a high density self-sustaining rainbow trout population, plus brook and brown trout. It can be reached by foot travel. Reese Run has been recommended by the Commission for Wilderness Trout Stream status, as has

the Hemlock Creek Watershed



Norway Run. Despite a history of oil operations and some strip mining on the headwaters, the Hemlock Creek watershed is doing well, says Area Fisheries Manager Lee. The drainage contains populations of small food fish, dace, white suckers, sculpins, creek chubs, as well as crayfish and plentiful aquatic insects.

Part of the plan for the land under the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy buy is for the capping of all oil and gas wells on the property. To purchase the land, the Conservancy entered into an agreement with ITL Corporation, which will harvest some of the tract's prime timber resources. Visiting anglers will doubtless see logging equipment and trucks. The specifications of the cut include a 200-foot no-cut buffer on named streams and 100-foot buffer on unnamed creeks. There are other restraints on haul and skid roads, log landings, tree harvest sizes, and cutting locations. These guidelines are intended to protect against erosion and other adverse effects on the watershed.

Joe Brancato lives not far from Hemlock Creek and is an avid fisherman. Brancato is doing his master's thesis on the creek and its tributaries, including an "EPT study," identifying resident Ephemeroptera (mayflies), Plecoptera (stoneflies), and Trichoptera (caddis flies). His knowledge of the watershed comes from scientific investigations as well as days afield with rod and reel.

"There are some really big trout in here," says Brancato of Hemlock Creek. "I've seen trout close to citation size."

Porcupine Run and Hemlock Creek have produced well for Brancato and his favorite fishing partner, his father. "Last Memorial Day, dad caught and released 16 trout of all three kinds—brook, brown and rainbow, on Hemlock Creek above Reese Run, all on dry flies."

Brancato says that 75 percent of the trout he catches are wild rainbows, about 20 percent are browns, and only five percent are native brook trout. The rainbows and browns are "fairly nice size, but I've never caught a brookie over 10 inches," he adds. Brancato cautions that these creeks aren't the wild trout waters of Potter County. "Here you have to work for your trout. There aren't as many little ones as up there, but the fish you catch here are bigger."

Porcupine is a "gorgeous" stream, Brancato says, and Hemlock Creek "has some surprisingly deep pools, where you can't see the bottom, even in mid-summer." The streams stay cold through the hot months. During last year's July and August heat wave, watershed sampling ranged from 55 to 65 degrees, comfortable trout temperatures.

For fly fishermen, the watershed has a lot of caddises, says Brancato, including the Grannom in May. Fish caddis patterns late spring through summer, he suggests. As for mayflies, from Memorial Day to the end of June, the Green Drake is on, sometimes heavily. Hemlock Creek also has a good Sulfur hatch. Because these streams stay cold, their hatches fall a little later than on nearby larger waters, like Oil Creek, prolonging angler sport.

photo-Linda Steiner; map graphics-Ted Walke

Wild rainbows

At first glance there seems nothing unusual that would enable the Hemlock Creek watershed to produce wild rainbows. Yet, something is happening here, or has happened, to make the drainage nearly unique. Wild rainbows in Pennsylvania are "few and far between," says Area Fisheries Manager Lee, but no one knows exactly why.

Porcupine Run is a high-gradient stream, falling clear and fast out of the mountains, a possible reason it is suitable to the reproduction of rainbows. "Rainbow trout are indigenous to the western part of the country where streams have this characteristic, and do well in a high gradient situation," explains Lee. He speculates that the abundant oxygen produced by the quick fall of the water may help the spawning and hatching success of rainbow trout.

Rainbow trout require more alkaline water than brown or brook trout. Acidic water conditions, according to the "Vermont Stream Survey - 1952-60" (Vermont Fish & Game Department), reduce the viability of rainbow trout milt. In Pennsylvania, many densely forested mountain streams show slightly acidic qualities. But by Commission samplings, Porcupine Run and Reese Run were pH 7.2 (1986) and 7.0 (1981), slightly alkaline and neutral. Last April, Brancato's sampling of Porcupine showed pH 6.68, still "very good," says Tom Greene, Commission Coldwater Unit Leader, and suitable to rainbows.

Greene speculates the wild rainbows in the Hemlock Creek watershed and elsewhere in the state are the result of early stockings and serendipitous conditions of trout strain, stream flow, geology and water quality. Greene suggests there are about a dozen creeks in the state producing wild rainbows. The most notable are Porcupine Run in the northwest, a couple of small tributaries to Bowman Creek in the northeast, Falling Spring near Chambersburg in the southeast, and several streams near Laughlintown in the southwest. Access is best to the Hemlock Creek watershed and to Falling Spring, where conservation easements and other agreements with landowners are in effect. Greene says wild rainbows have also been found in the upper reaches of the Letort.

"A lot of these pocket populations developed from spring spawning rainbow trout plantings back decades ago. They adapted to the river system and were able to compete with the brook trout," Greene explains. "There is some validity to rainbows encroaching on native brook trout populations, as has happened in the southern Appalachians, especially the Great Smokies." As far as brown trout, he adds, rainbows did best establishing themselves where there were few of the European imports as competitors.

Pennsylvania wild rainbows are spring spawners—that's the species' natural timing. Current hatchery-raised rainbows were developed by fish culture to spawn in autumn, as do brooks and browns. Greene does not believe that the fall spawning rainbow trout stocked today could reproduce and create wild strains. One major factor would be winter water temperatures. Rainbow trout eggs cannot survive below 40 degrees, he says.

"There are probably particular strains of spring spawning rainbow trout in the Pennsylvania streams where they are reproducing, wild strains that were stocked years ago and established themselves, rather than the domestic strain." The strains that "took" filled a void in the environment, Greene suggests. Where they didn't take, they may have been stocked over "very robust" populations of brooks and browns, or in water too acidic for the sweetwater rainbow.

Jan Caveney, Waterways Conservation Officer in Cumberland County, fished the Hemlock Creek watershed when he was assigned to Indiana County. With Falling Spring now practically in his backyard, Caveney continues his longtime fascination with the eastern wild rainbow, and where, how and when they were established in Pennsylvania.

Caveney has researched records of early plantings, and says that rainbows from hatcheries along the Pacific Coast were stocked heavily in Pennsylvania in the 1880s. The strains shipped here, says Caveney, were probably a blend of non-migratory and steelhead rainbow races.

Fish were shotgunned across Pennsylvania. An 1893-94 report of the federal Board of Fish Commissioners notes that rainbows were placed in Loyalhanna Creek, Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle, Allegheny River near Coudersport, Sugar Creek near Troy, Harvey's Lake near Nanticoke, the Susquehanna River, and dozens of others. Unfortunately, the fish generally did not establish reproducing populations in their new home.

By 1895, the effort was discontinued. The Report of the State Commissioners of Fisheries for 1889-90-91 says "the rainbow has been rather extensively introduced, but with such imperfect results in most cases that the Fish Commission has practically given up its distribution."

The rainbows planted around the turn of the century were essentially the same, genetically and behaviorally, as wild Western fish. These very early trout and renewed stocking attempts from 1907 to 1913, Caveney surmises, are the basis for the remnant reproducing rainbow populations in Pennsylvania.

At one time, says Caveney, the Allegheny and Delaware rivers had tributary streams with spawning wild rainbows. Before Kinzua Dam was built, the Allegheny was known for big 'bows.

One volume in Caveney's collection, *One Hundred Pennsylvania Trout Streams* (1962), recalls the Allegheny from Corydon to Kinzua had "gigantic rainbow trout" in its "swift and turbulent" waters. The book bemoans the soon-to-be-built dam, which impounded that section of the river. Pithole Creek, which enters the Allegheny near Hemlock Creek, was also recognized at that time for its rainbow trout.

Caveney has fished the wild rainbows of Vermont, where the streams "come slashing down off the Green Mountains," he says. These streams have an alkaline character, he says, unlike similar gradient streams in neighboring New Hampshire. White Mountains waters are more acidic and do not have rainbows. The Pennsylvania streams with rainbows remind him of Vermont, Caveney explains.

For the transplanted rainbows to take hold, Caveney says, "they needed cold temperatures like other trout, but they also needed added alkalinity, and they usually needed that with great gradient." Caveney thinks that besides the perfect environment, the fish had to be from the right source, a wild strain that fit the conditions of the new Eastern home. It was a happy coincidence for the Hemlock Creek watershed and a few others in Pennsylvania.

It may be that nearly 100 years ago the rainbow trout that resulted in today's wild fish were being stocked. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy representatives, in announcing the acquisition of the President Oil lands, said they hoped that 100 years from today, their foresightedness would be applauded. With the rate of development in this state, that will likely come true. Anglers, however, don't have to wait to enjoy the streams of the Hemlock Creek drainage and their unusual blend of wild trout.

Lyme Disease Guide

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 9,000 cases of Lyme disease were reported throughout the United States last year. Lyme disease is transmitted by the bite of a tick infected with the disease--the deer tick is the most common carrier of the disease. With the tick population on the rise, there may be as many as five to 10 times more cases reported this year.

Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria that travels through the bloodstream and can cause problems in the major organs of the body. If left untreated, serious problems can arise. Arthritis, severe headaches, nervous system or cardiac abnormalities and other complications can occur months or even years after you are bitten by an infected tick.

Early symptoms of the disease are usually mild and can be easily overlooked. However, some things to look for are reddish, expanding rashes or blotches on the skin and/or flu-like symptoms such as chills, fever and fatigue. If you experience any of these symptoms or suspect you have been bitten by an infected tick, it is best to consult your physician.

For free information about the prevention, detection and treatment of Lyme disease, contact the American Lyme Disease Foundation, Inc., Royal Executive Park, 3 International Drive, Rye Brook, NY 10573. Phone: 1-800-876-LYME or 914-934-9155.--*Charrie Seifert.*

Angler's Notebook *by Dave Wonderlich*

Digestive juices begin breaking down fish flesh as soon as the fish dies. The best way to ensure the finest eating is putting your catch on ice immediately. However, remember to keep only what you know you can use. Return the rest unharmed.

New rubber nets or those made without knots are best for catching and releasing fish. Stiff nylon nets with knots can remove the protective coating from a fish's scales, which leaves the fish susceptible to disease, fungus and parasites.

Many fish win their freedom when they just begin their run from the reel because many drags require excessive force to start the line spool spinning and the resulting tug pulls the hook free. Drags typically run smoothly after they are started, but the important test in keeping a good fish on may be how easily the drag allows the spool to "get started" in spinning line out.

Lead shot is now prohibited from use in hunting waterfowl because ducks and geese die from ingesting the lead, which ends up at the bottom of lakes and streams. The idea of banning lead sinkers has also been gaining impetus in Washington.

When tying the same pattern of flies with varying amounts of weight built into the body for fishing different water conditions and different depths, use different tying thread to color code the various weights: Flies with a black head—no weight; brown head—light weight; gray head—medium weight; and tan head—heavy weight.

To keep the noise down as things go "clank" in aluminum boats, try lining the bottom of the craft with indoor/outdoor carpet. Anchors, thermoses, rods, reels and tackle boxes make much less of a noise when they bump the removable and washable carpeting. The "rug" also helps keep the feet warmer when boating in colder water.

Even though most ice fishermen know various depths of ice hold specific amounts of weight safely on still water, never be confident of ice depths on flowing water. Thin ice spots could be anywhere under the flow and change a good day into a tragedy.

If you are the typical trout angler, your reels are probably resting in a safe spot ready for opening day. Chances are they could use some attention. A Q-tip works well to get dirt particles and grime from the mechanisms, and a fine lubricating oil completes the job when applied to metal-to-metal moving parts—the change in reeling and casting action can make those first spring trips much more enjoyable while extending the life of the reel.

For good ice fishing action with a jigging rod, try fishing a fluorescent ice fly (a small metal spoon with a hook) baited with a salmon egg, grub or small minnow.

There is still time left this winter to fish for trout in open water. Limestone creeks with their typically warmer water can produce good action, particularly in the afternoon when the sun is on the water. Freestone streams can also provide action, but the offering must be worked slower and closer to the holding locations.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management

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Cast and Caught



Marc Iarrapino and Bill Harrison, of Butler, show off the trout they caught on the opening day of the 1993 season. The boys hooked the six fish while fishing the Little Connoquenessing Creek in Butler County. Great job, guys!



Terry Reck, of Dover, caught this largemouth bass while fishing a lake near Mt. Holly Springs. The fish weighed 8 1/2 pounds and was 22 1/2 inches long.



Bethlehem resident Carlos DeCeia fooled this rainbow trout with a piece of bread. The fish, caught out of the Little Lehigh Creek, weighed 6 pounds, 14 ounces and measured 25 inches in length.



Lower Burrell resident Lois Schultz caught and released this largemouth bass while fishing on Tamarack Lake. The fish weighed 6 1/2 pounds and was 21 inches long. Great job, Lois!



Gene Lasecki, of Wilkes-Barre, hooked this walleye while fishing a redworm on Lake Carey, Wyoming County. The fish measured 32 inches long and weighed 11.5 pounds.

On the Water

with Carl Richardson

The Crowd

I like to fish alone and do so most of the time because my work and personal schedules seldom coincide with those of my angling friends. However, when I am alone on my favorite waters, I am among a crowd. In the crowd are the people who have helped shape me as an angler. Whether it is someone I fish with regularly or just passed on the water and exchanged a few words or a hot lure, each person had some influence on my fishing. I spend a lot of time reading everything I can get my hands on, but I learn most from on-the-water experiences. Those experiences and the people who share their knowledge and love for the sport have shaped me. They are the people who follow me to the water each time I fish.

For example, each time I make a cast with my 8-foot 6-weight fly rod, I look to the crowd for my dad. I remember the fun we had searching for the "perfect" rod to serve as reward for my college graduation. Dad and I don't get the chance to fish together much now, but I know he is with me in spirit each time I use that rod. When I break down and go fishing for carp, he stands among the group, with a smile that stretches from ear to ear. His passion for fishing, and his desire to share that passion, left its mark on me.

Even though I never fished with my dad's uncle George, he is also among the crowd. His interest in fishing influenced my dad, who in turn passed the sport to me. I know there are many others who I did not have the pleasure of fishing with, many long passed that have also shaped me.

Looking over my should as I pick a fly from my box is Eric McClellan scrutinizing my selection and its quality. Eric, always the perfectionist, helped me hone my skills as a fly tier. Eric has the patience of a saint and is proficient with nymphs and wet flies, neither of which are strong points for me. I know that each time I fish with a fly that I tied, he is there with me, even though our work schedules never seem to mesh. Eric and I are to fishing what the tortoise and the hare are to fables. When I get pumped and cover two miles of water in 20 minutes, I can almost hear him telling me to slow down.

Whether it is someone I fish with regularly or just passed on the water and exchanged a few words or a hot lure, each person had some influence on my fishing.

I also find former tournament fly caster Andy Decker in the crowd. From the first time I met Andy, he is always quick to offer those pointers that can add distance to my cast. On those occasions when Andy and I do get a chance to fish together, I can see that he shares my excitement when I do everything right. So when I fish alone and make a tough cast I turn to see if he was watching.

Remember the influence that your words or actions can have on the next person you encounter briefly on the water, or fish with often.

When I flub a cast and set the hook deeply in a nearby tree, I make sure that Dave Wolf is looking the other way. Dave is one of those friends who likes to see you stumble occasionally, and is quick to offer a wise crack in return. He is also one of the more philosophical anglers of the bunch, with insight into the real reasons we fish. Although we are separated by distance, age and experience, we share the same love and passion for fishing. I feel somewhat honored to have him in the gallery.

I could go on and on about those with whom I've fished, but each story is nearly the same. Someone took the time to share his passion, and I in turn soaked it in like weathered wood takes in paint.

On the other hand, we have all encountered anglers whose actions are what most would call unsportsmanlike. They are also among the crowd I fish with. I know that just around the bend in the river is the guy I found heaving each little sunfish that ate his worm onto the bank, cursing each one as it flopped in the mud. His disrespect for all things that call the waters home also left its mark.

Each person we meet on the stream may be at some point influenced by our words or actions. That is a weighty responsibility. Simple actions can lead to complex and long-lasting impressions. Just by offering flies or lures to those who ask, "What are they hitting?" or providing a few kind words, or acting as we would want to be treated, affects the recipient. How many times have others asked you those questions but you held back because you didn't want to be bothered?

Remember the influence that your words or actions can have on the next person you encounter briefly on the water, or fish with often. Whether or not you choose to make that influence a positive one is your decision. Just remember that someone might take what you offer, along with the spirit you intended, each time that person is on the water.

I have to gather up the gang and get on the water—the fish are biting.

SMART Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

The Right Tool for the Right Job, Part 1: Which reel is right for me?

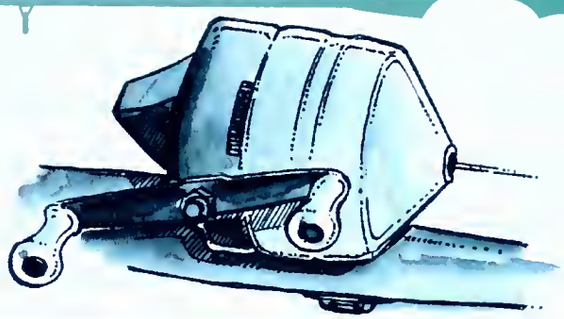
Let's face it—fishing can be complicated. There is so much to know. Equipment, techniques, fish and the places they call home. Some of us learned these things the hard way, by trial and error. Undoubtedly, the best way to learn how to fish is by watching over the shoulder of someone who has sorted through the creel full of fishing how-to. That person shows you the small things that add to your fishing success and enjoyment. But how do you pick up on the finer points if you have no friends who fish?

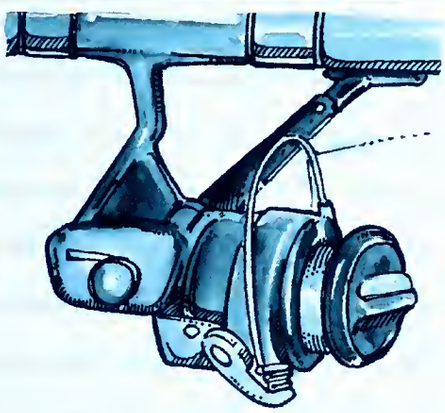
On this page is a look at the fishing notebook of an angler who knows that there is more to fishing than just tying on a hook. The SMART Angler's Notebook is full of ideas and ways to get the most out of fishing. Whether you are new to fishing or you are a seasoned pro, there is something for you in the pages of this notebook.

The guy on the home improvement television show says, "you must use the right tool for the right job." Fishing tackle follows the same rule. You don't go fishing for bluegills with tackle suited for casting big musky plugs—that's no fun! You should also match your equipment to your abilities.

In the first part of this notebook series the advantages of the three basic types of reels are shown. Rod construction, length and action will be discussed in the second part of this series.

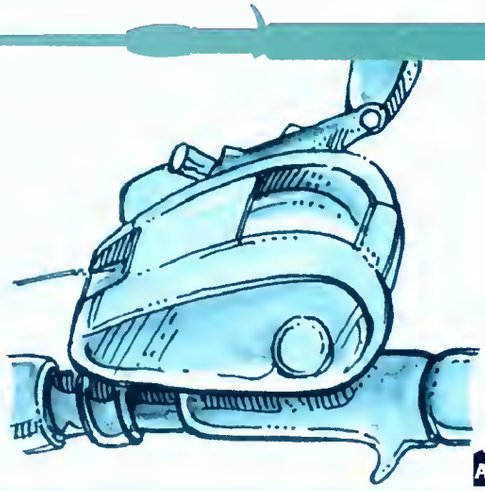
SPINCASTING: ADVANTAGES—EASY ONE-HAND CASTING, GOOD FOR YOUNG AND BEGINNING ANGLERS. DOESN'T TANGLE, INEXPENSIVE. CAN BE ACCURATE WITH LIMITED PRACTICE. DISADVANTAGES—HARD TO CHANGE LINE, SO ONE REEL CAN'T BE USED FOR MULTIPLE PURPOSES. NOT GOOD WITH LIGHTWEIGHT LURES AND BAITS.





SPINNING: ADVANTAGES—VERY GOOD WITH LIGHT LINES (2-POUND TO 6-POUND TEST) AND LURES. SPOOLS CAN BE CHANGED QUICKLY AND EASILY. ONE-HAND CASTING OPERATION ON NEW MODELS WITH "FAST CAST" BAILS. MOST REELS CONVERT TO RIGHT-HAND OR LEFT-HAND RETRIEVE. DISADVANTAGES—LINE CAN TWIST, WHICH MAY CAUSE BIRD'S NEST. MOST MODELS REQUIRE TWO HANDS TO CAST. NOT SO GOOD WITH HEAVY, STIFF LINE.

BAITCASTING: ADVANTAGES—USE THUMB TO CONTROL DISTANCE, SO REEL CAN BE VERY ACCURATE, GOOD WITH HEAVY LINES (10-POUND AND UP), REEL DOESN'T CAUSE LINE TO TWIST. QUICK, ONE-HAND OPERATION. WITH A LITLE PRACTICE AND PROPER SETTINGS, EASY TO USE. DISADVANTAGES—CHANGE SETTINGS WITH DIFFERENT LURE WEIGHTS, CAN GET NASTY BACKLASHES-"BIRD'S NEST"-IF NOT SET RIGHT OR DON'T THUMB SPOOL PROPERLY. LIMITED MODELS FOR LEFT-HAND RETRIEVE.



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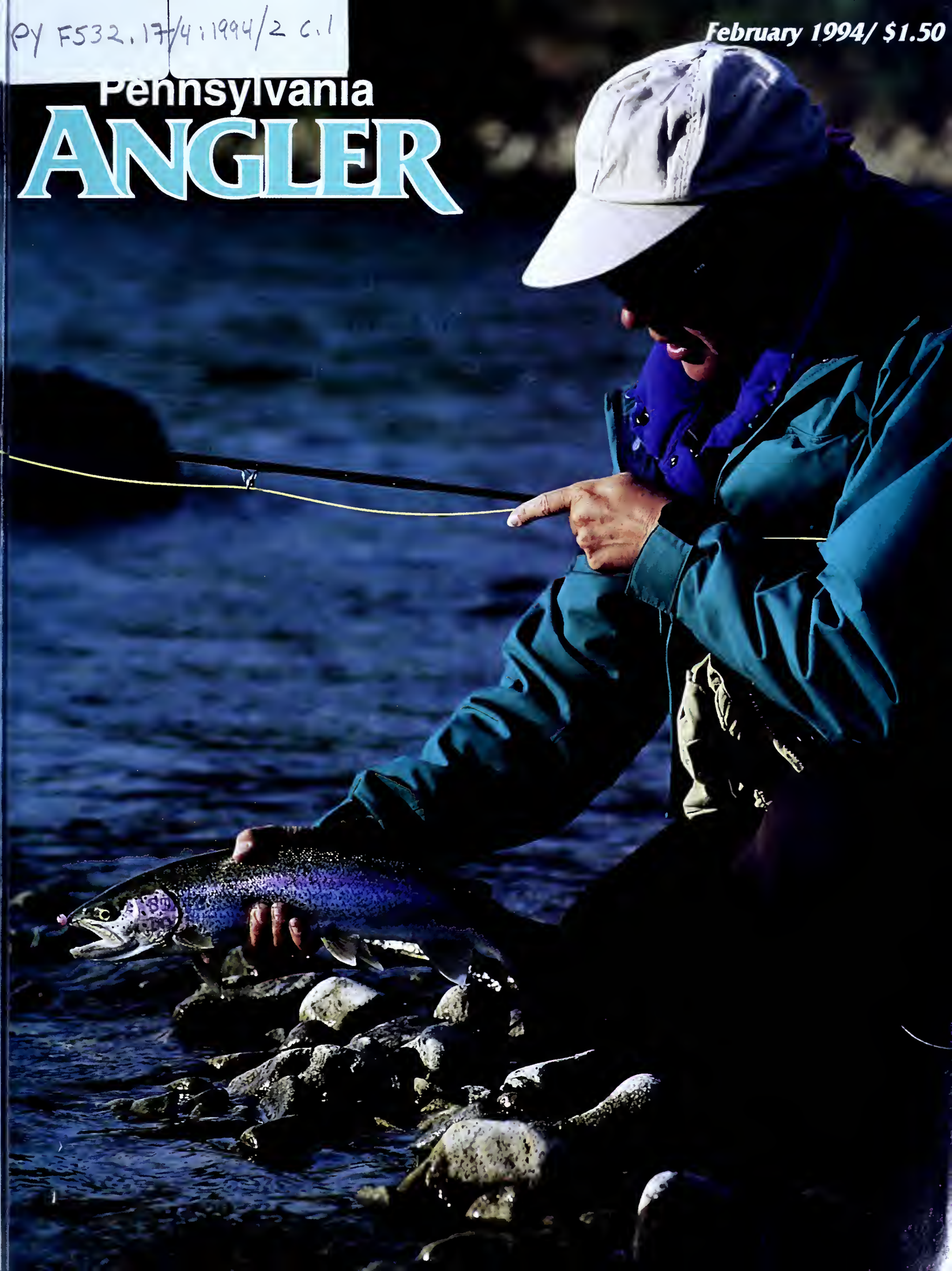




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Straight Talk

Innovation and Planning: Keys to the Future



Edward R. Miller, P.E.
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Over the next three fiscal years the Commission must commit nearly $6 million of its anticipated revenue to pay for personnel cost increases mandated by a collective bargaining agreement and the Governor's Office of Administration. Over the next few years the Commission also faces relentless inflation, reductions in federal funding, decreased interest on deposits, and other negative effects. These facts, together with the agency's move to assume fish stocking responsibilities for many federal waters, mean that nearly $13 million is needed over the next few years just to operate this agency at current program levels.

The Commission is also faced with the need to meet expanding maintenance demands at many facilities, renovation of existing public use areas to meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and anticipated increased rental costs that could amount to more than $800,000 during this period. Program expansions, including aquatic resource education and fishing and boating skills training for youngsters, improved fisheries programs, expanded stream and waterway access acquisitions and easements, and improvement of public access areas and lakes, are required to maintain Pennsylvania's fishing and boating opportunities. Enlargement of the "Adopt-a-Stream" program and other important functions where volunteer sportsmen unselfishly donate their time to help get the most education and resource protection for the least cost, are essential to Pennsylvania's fishing and boating future.

Pennsylvania's last increase in its basic resident fishing license fees was enacted in 1982, and a Pennsylvania resident can still fish 365 days per year at a cost of less than 5 cents per day. During the years license fees remained constant, agency costs have increased considerably, mostly because of inflationary cost increases and some moderate program expansions.

There is no other form of recreation where basic costs are so low. Compare it to golf, where green fees start at $20 or more per day for four to five hours of recreation, or downhill skiing, where $30 per eight-hour day is a bargain, and in both cases the season is limited. A two-hour movie costs $5 or more for persons age 12 and up. Even hunting, which is available only during restricted seasons, can cost Pennsylvanians nearly $90 in annual fees if they pursue the many available forms of hunting and trapping.

The first draft of the Commission's new comprehensive plan is completed and under staff and Commission review. The plan is now being further revised and will soon be shared with sportsmen for their review and input. This document, resulting from a systematic and comprehensive process involving staff from all agency programs, addresses how this agency can increase its effectiveness and service to anglers and boaters who use Pennsylvania's water resources. Final approval and implementation of the plan will ensure a bright future for fishing and boating in the Commonwealth, because it outlines specific goals and what steps must be taken to achieve the necessary results.

One of the important factors identified by the planning effort is the need to structure our program and its revenue system to attract and maintain novice anglers. This includes youngsters, families, spouses and companions, and others who may need instruction and encouragement to become successful, loyal anglers, hopefully for a lifetime. The Commission is currently exploring new ways to motivate these folks to become involved, including a lifetime and a family license program.

What does all this mean? It means that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission needs innovative legislation to increase Fish Fund revenues to provide approximately $5.5 million of new annual income. This action is needed before the 1995 season if this agency is to avoid deep reductions in public services and be able to move forward to meet the goals established by the comprehensive plan.

Your support and assistance in these efforts is essential and vital to the future of fishing and boating in Pennsylvania.

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Front cover photograph by Barry & Cathy Beck

Intriguing questions

Sometimes it's difficult to say whether fishing revolves around other events in our lives, or whether other events in our lives revolve around fishing. That's why Mike Bleech's sucker fishing article on page 4 evokes questions we need to ask ourselves now and then. In this article Bleech measures events in his life according to his fishing experiences. This notion touches the hazy, very wide, erratic lines that separate a pastime from an avid pursuit from a way of life. Of course, measuring participation is qualitative and difficult, even though we all know different levels of participation when we see them. Bleech's article sparks these questions: Just how "avid" an angler are you? What is fishing's place in your life? And how and why has your involvement changed over the years? If you have children and perhaps grandchildren, you might compare their involvement in fishing with your involvement. Is it the same? Is it less? Is it more? Let's do what we can to ensure that someday our children at least in part measure their lives according to their fishing. All things considered, that's an admirable perspective. Things could be a lot worse, don't you think? Check out Carl Richardson's "SMART Angler's Notebook" on page 31. This monthly page is designed for experienced and inexperienced anglers. The information is vital to teaching new anglers how to participate in our sport.
– Art Michaels, Editor.

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Sucker for a Warm Spring Day

by Mike Bleech

"Don't use so much worm," Ray instructed me. It was 1961, late March. I was 11 years old. Ray was an old man who had taken me under his wing. More than anything we liked to fish. In those days all gamefish seasons were closed before the opening day of trout season. So when the snow melted and the sun coaxed us outdoors, we fished for suckers.

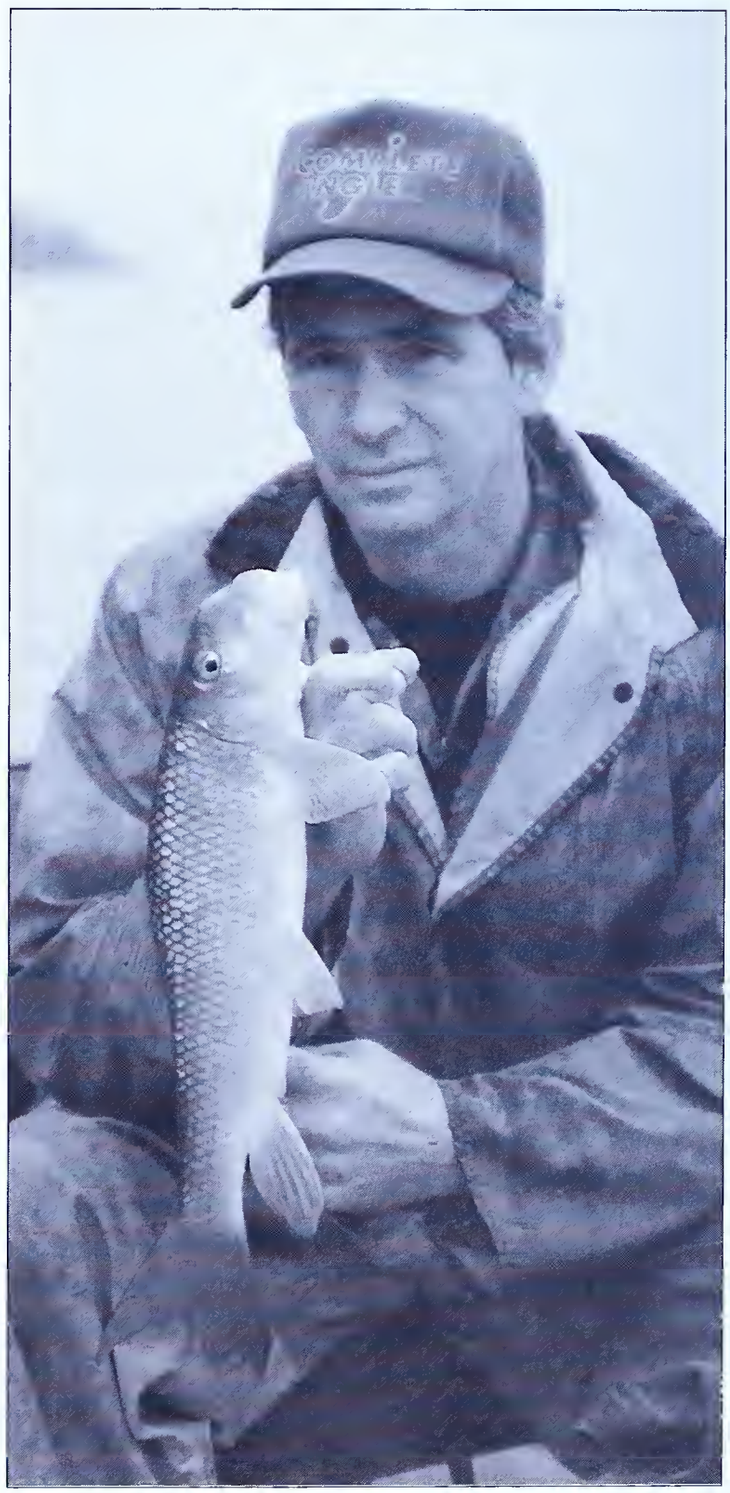
Our sucker hole was a short walk upriver from the new house Ray had just built on a high bank of the Allegheny River, across the river from the future site of the Buckaloons campground. Here near the mouth of a small brook, the main river current peeled away from the bank, creating a relatively calm eddy.

Ray had been taking me trout fishing since I was 2 years old, but this was my first serious spring sucker fishing. He showed me how to rig my line with a snelled hook at the end, a bell sinker above that, and another snelled hook above the sinker. He liked that rig because it kept both baits at the bottom.

We had gathered worms while spading the garden. Red worms are the best, he said, but if you can't get enough of them, the white worms will do. Nightcrawlers are too big. A sucker mouth is small. Hooking them is difficult. The trick is threading the worm over the hook, using just enough worm to cover the hook and leave a little dangling past the point. If you use too much worm, the sucker just tugs on the loose end.

This was before I had seen a spinning reel. We used the old revolving handle "knuckle busters." To get the bait out I pulled the black braided line off the reel and laid it in loops by my feet. Then, holding the line between my left index finger and thumb, I flipped the bait underhand as near the edge of the current as I could get it.

Sucker fishing is neither difficult nor complicated. In fact, it is lazy fishing, which is a fine thing to do on a sunny spring day.



We propped our rods in forked sticks that we had cut while walking to the sucker hole. Ray taught me to use willow, because it grew back quickly. Then Ray leaned back against a tree to relax. I was less patient. My mind wandered to other things. Ray constantly had to remind me to watch the end of my rod.

Fishing was good. By dinnertime we had a dozen suckers on our stringer. After dinner Ray cleaned them, and later ground the meat and made fish cakes. The carcasses were buried in the garden.

"This is the way the Indians did it," Ray said, burying one carcass under each corn mound.

And the corn did grow very well. When we ate fresh corn on the cob late that summer on a very hot day, I thought about the suckers, and about how good the sun had felt in the spring.



The winter of 1965-66 was bitter cold. As I left for school each morning, I recall the temperature on our side porch thermometer reaching below minus 20 for a full week. When winter gave way to the first muddy days of spring, my pal Dan Stimmell and I were even more eager than usual to do some fishing. All sport fishing that we knew about was still closed before the trout season opener, so we headed for the sucker hole.

We had a new freedom. Dan had his driver's license and a used Fiat. And we had a fine spring day. It was cool but the sky was blue, and the sun was bright. Before going to the river we stopped at the town leaf dump to collect bait, and at a ma & pa grocery store for a couple of cans of pop.

After getting our lines set at the edge of the current, we built a small fire. Spring flooding had left a lot of dead wood along the river bank. We carried a few big flat rocks near the fire to sit on, to keep our rear ends off the cold ground. The ground was firmly frozen when we arrived. But after a few hours of direct sunlight, and our walking around, it was a sloppy mess.

Fishing was slow. The good fishing was a week or two away. We talked about the things teenage boys usually talk about– girls and sports. It was the first time I had been back to the old sucker hole since Ray had passed on. When we were not talking and I relaxed and closed my eyes with the warm sun in my face, I could still see Ray's image clearly.

"Sure wish we had brought something to eat," Dan said. "I'm hungry."

"What about this," I said, "holding a chub that I had just caught."

We did not have any cooking gear with us, so we just laid it in hot coals. After a while we pulled it out of the fire, and when it cooled enough to touch it, we ate it. A bit of salt sure would have improved the flavor, but we laughed while we ate it, so it could not have been too bad.

The spring of 1972 was a confusing time for me. I had returned from Vietnam the previous fall, and what to do with the rest of my life was weighing heavily on my mind. I went to the old sucker hole alone that year.

The river was high from spring runoff. It backed up the little tributary at the sucker hole so that it was too deep to see the bottom where we usually forded it by hopping from rock to rock. I walked a short way upstream to a tree that had fallen across the stream, where I walked across the stream. Just as I stepped onto the bank on the opposite side of the stream, the tree crackled. It startled me and I jumped to the bank, landing on my rear end. Something sharp jabbed me. I reached under my backside and pulled out a large flint chip. Examining it I determined that it was a broken arrowhead.

About 100 yards upriver from the sucker hole, separated from the river by a 25-yard-wide strip of trees and thick undergrowth, is a field. It was still tilled then. From the raised highway that bordered the side of the field opposite the river you could see a row of round reddish patches in the soil. Those reddish patches were caused by fires. Centuries ago Indians camped there, and probably fished at the sucker hole. When Ray was alive, he and I would walk through the field right after it had been plowed, often the same days we fished for suckers, looking for arrowheads and pottery chips.

That spring, when I was 22 years old, I discovered something very interesting about suckers. Fishing tackle had come a long way during the previous decade. Ultralight spinning tackle was a big fad and I carried my ultralight outfit sucker fishing. To my great amusement, suckers behaved very differently when hooked on the light tackle. They made blistering fast runs and they even jumped. Just about every one of the numerous suckers I caught and released that day jumped!

Since then I have used ultralight tackle for suckers.

My bride's feet slid out from under her, and she landed in the mud with a splat. As if that were not enough, she slid down the gooey bank into the edge of the river. She sat there with a pathetic look on her face.

"We're not going to catch any fish if you keep playing in the water," I kidded.

There was no doubt from then on that she would fit nicely as an outdoor writer's wife. She picked herself up, and on all fours crawled back up the bank and sat down to watch her rod.

After a respectful period of silence I instructed her. "Watch the tip of the rod," I said. "They won't swallow the hook. If the rod tip wiggles set the hook. Even if it is just a light tap," I said while demonstrating with my index finger.

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for a Warm Spring Day

The river never did get right for sucker fishing last spring. But I went to the old sucker hole anyway. Trout season was open before the river was low enough. I had been eating crappie fillets for a month, and fishing for steelhead in the Lake Erie tributaries. We have several more fishing opportunities in Pennsylvania now than we did when Ray took me to the sucker hole 30 years ago. It had been a few years since sucker fishing seemed like a good idea.

I set up my folding chair on a flat, sunny spot, and baited my hooks with halves of a red worm. My cast hit just at the edge of the current. It settled to the bottom in the swirling edge, right where it should be, and I propped the rod in a forked stick.

The first hit came so quickly, at first I thought it was the sinker still bouncing along the bottom. It ran upriver when I set the hook, turning just before the line tangled in a willow bush. I marveled at the speed of its run. When I was a kid I had nothing to compare it with, and because suckers were considered rough fish, I did not think much about their fighting ability. Now that I have fished across the continent for most freshwater sport fish, I know better. I am not so inclined to judge by reputation. I am ready to give suckers their due. Fought on ultralight tackle, pound for pound, few other fish surpass the speed of their runs.

I unhooked the sucker carefully and slid it back into the cool water. I never did care for those fish cakes made with ground sucker, and corn is inexpensive. It takes up too much space for a small garden.

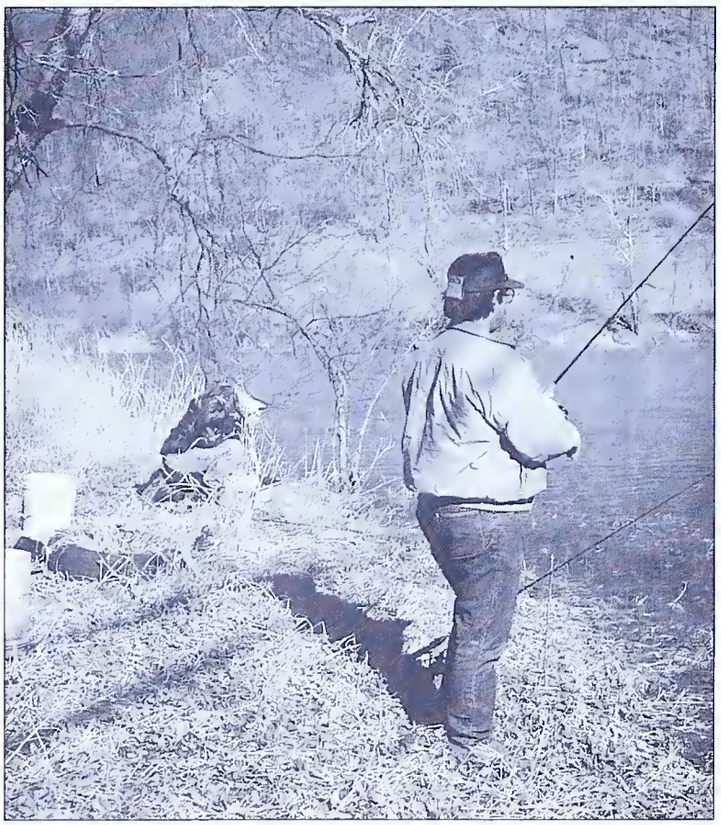


photo-Mike Bleech

Spring Sucker Fishing Pattern

Usually suckers are spread out. I have seen them feeding in riffles, and while scuba diving I saw them in the deepest river holes. But soon after the ice breaks up, suckers begin their spawning movements. At this time they tend to congregate at the mouths of tributary streams and along the edges of the current at the bottom ends of riffles. The key element is the edge of a current.

In Pennsylvania the spring sucker fishing pattern begins anywhere from mid-March to early April. The fishing often begins as soon as the spring runoff flow recedes below the bank-full mark, so the current edges are on normal river bottom, not on the bank.--*MB.*

How It's Done

Sucker fishing is neither difficult nor complicated. In fact, it is lazy fishing, which is a fine thing to do on a sunny spring day.

Any rod and reel outfit will do. If you have an ultralight spinning outfit, by all means use it. That is my preference. Though suckers are not especially line-shy, there is no need to use line stronger than 8-pound test. The only other items you need are hooks and sinkers. I suggest size 8 fine-wire hooks and an assortment of sinkers that includes small and large splitshot, and a few larger sinkers of any sort you choose. Keep it simple.

Which terminal rigging you use is not terribly important. It is only important that you keep the bait anchored near the bottom. Unlike most fishing, the bait should not drift with the current. One rig you might like has a hook at the end of the line, a sinker about 18 inches above that, and an 8-inch dropper line with a hook just above the sinker.

Use small red worms if you can get them, but not what some anglers call "sewer worms." White worms work fine. But nightcrawlers are too big. Thread the worm over the hook so the point is covered, leaving maybe a quarter-inch of worm dangling past the point. Your bait should be small enough for a sucker to get it into its small mouth easily.

Cast your bait near the edge of a current. Move the bait periodically until you find a concentration of suckers. They do move quite a bit, though, so a place that is hot for a while might just as easily cool off while another place gets hot.

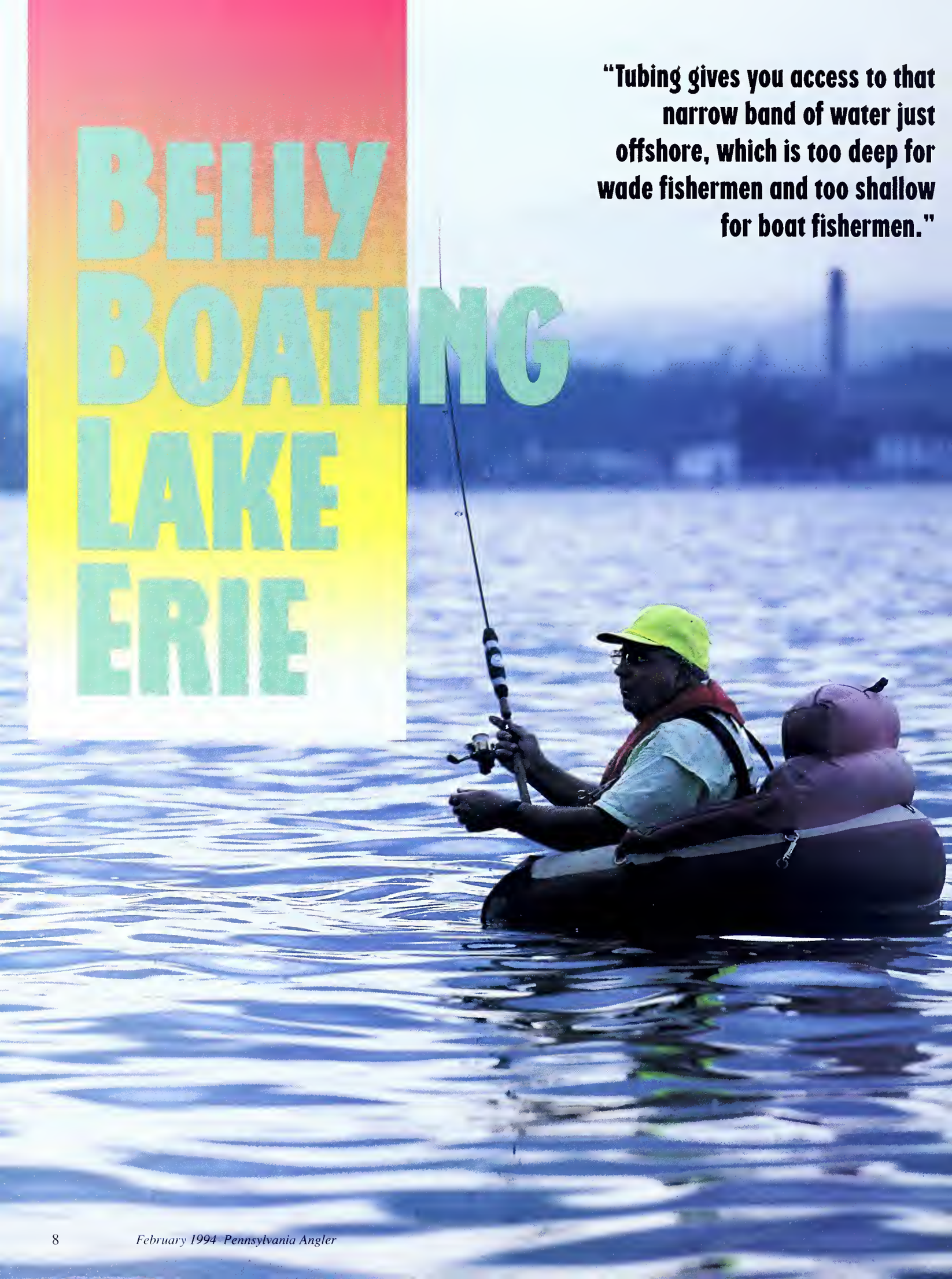
When the bait settles to the bottom, prop the rod up at an angle that lets you easily see the tip wiggle when a sucker takes the bait. Then reel the slack out of the line. The most challenging part about sucker fishing is setting the hook. Seldom do suckers hook themselves, or run with the bait. You have to keep a careful watch on the rod tip and set the hook while the sucker is mouthing the bait. The hit is usually a tap-tap-tap wiggle of the rod tip, sometimes so slight that you can miss it if you blink.--*MB.*

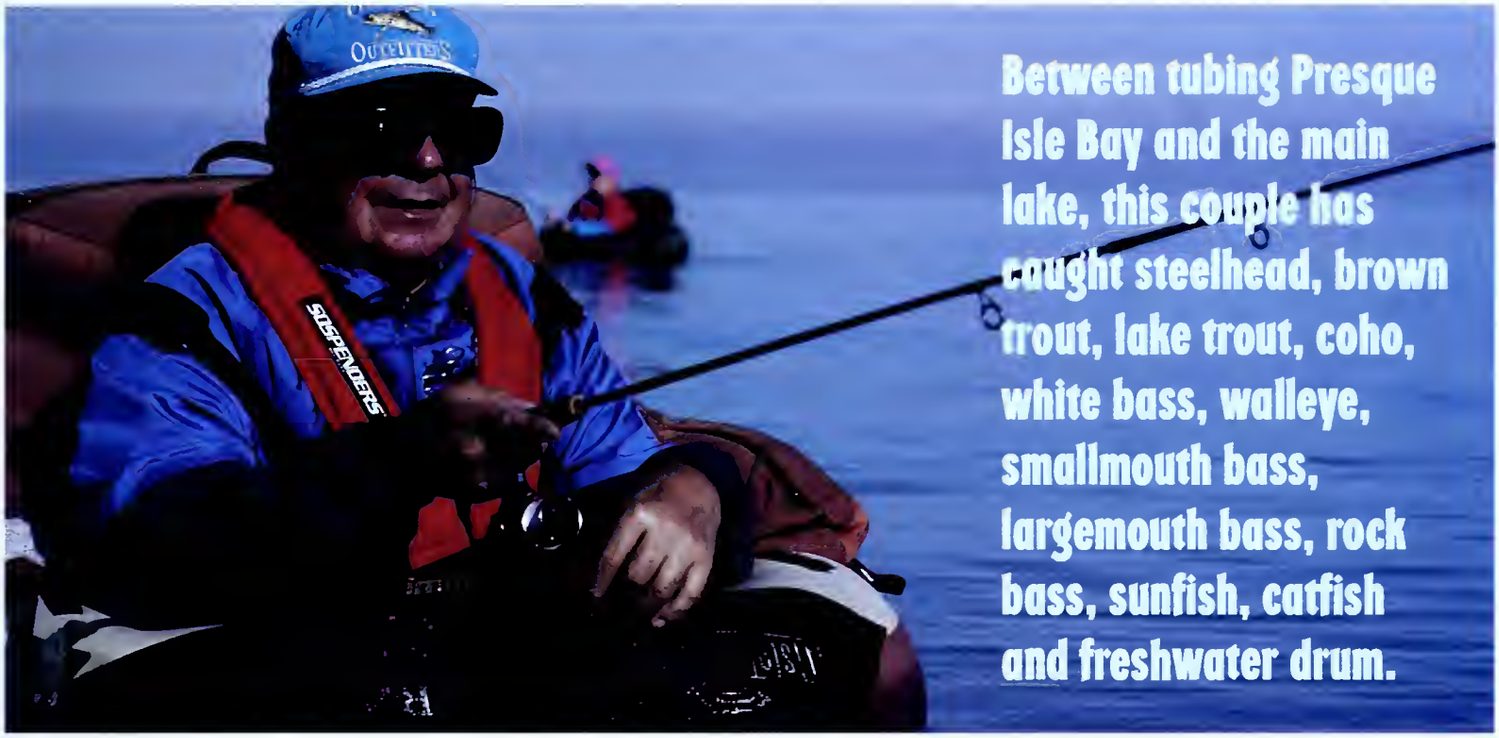


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BELLY BOATING LAKE ERIE

"Tubing gives you access to that narrow band of water just offshore, which is too deep for wade fishermen and too shallow for boat fishermen."





It's a foggy morning along the Lake Erie shore as you trudge in chest waders across the beach at Trout Run for a morning of steelhead fishing. Through the mist about 100 yards offshore, you notice something in the water. Far too small for a boat, even for a canoe. It's sitting low on the water, moving slowly from east to west, with an appendage rising and falling.

"Oh my gosh!" you mutter under your breath and swallow hard. Is it for real? Is there really a Nessie sea creature in Lake Erie?

Does a survivor of prehistoric times live in Lake Erie? I don't know. But what you see this morning is Bob Johns, or his wife Dorothy, fishing in a belly boat.

Belly boats on Lake Erie? Sounds like someone had too much dandelion wine. Who in his right mind would fish from a float tube on the big lake?

I can't speak for the state of mind of everyone out there in a belly boat, but rest assured the anglers I know who use float tubes on Erie are perfectly normal--or at least as normal as fanatic fishermen can be.

Tubes bridge the gap

"Tube fishing on Erie is completely safe," says Bob Johns, "as long as you follow certain guidelines. Actually, it could be argued that it is safer than being in a boat on Lake Erie. Every tuber is in a personal life boat. There is no way the tube can overturn and you cannot accidentally fall into the water without a PFD, as you might on a pleasure craft. Tubers know the limits of a belly boat. They don't push those limits as a boat operator might."

I initially met Bob Johns in the 1970s when he was running around in a bass boat fishing tournaments. When I ran into him last year, it had been about 15 years since we had fished together. Then I discovered he had traded his 17-foot solid fiberglass bass boat for an air-filled donut barely 3 feet across.

Why tubing instead of wading the shore like thousands of other anglers?

"In a tube I can cover more territory and I can fish longer because you don't tire like those do who wade the shore," Johns says. "Tubing gives you access to that narrow band of water just offshore, which is too deep for wade fishermen and too shallow for boat fishermen.

"Ironically, Dorothy and I got into tubing Lake Erie about eight years ago because of a phobia. I enjoyed traveling to Erie every weekend for fishing, so we finally obtained a weekend retreat on the lake shore. But I could not get Dorothy interested in angling because she was afraid of water. Dorothy does not like being in a boat, and she is even leery of wading because of an equilibrium problem. But when I put her in a tube, she took to it right away. Now she feels completely safe and secure, and she is ready to take on the biggest fish around."

At first their float tube adventures were limited to Presque Isle Bay in search of bass and panfish. Bob loves to tell the story about the day he invited a few friends from his old bass club to Presque Isle for a little one-on-one fishing contest. The two bass buddies were permitted to fish from their bass boat. Bob and Dorothy fished from belly boats. Each legal bass caught was measured and immediately released. By the end of the day, the tubers had smoked the guys in the bass boat!

Tubing for steelhead

Although a stream trout fisherman from his early teen years, Bob fell into fishing Erie's steelhead by accident. During the summer, Bob and Dorothy would look out across the calm lake in the early morning and discuss how ideal it seemed for float tubing. They decided to give it a try at Trout Run one day. Drawing intense stares from beach-bound anglers, they maneuvered their tubes beyond the casting range of waders. That summer they discovered the world of white bass on jigs.

"Certainly was fun," adds Dorothy. "That summer of white bass experience quickly built my confidence in fishing the open lake in a tube."

The next spring they decided to give trout fishing a try. Bob and Dorothy tested Lake Erie's steelhead and coho with special spinners built over the winter. Initial success resulted in a more serious look at Erie's nearshore trout fishery.

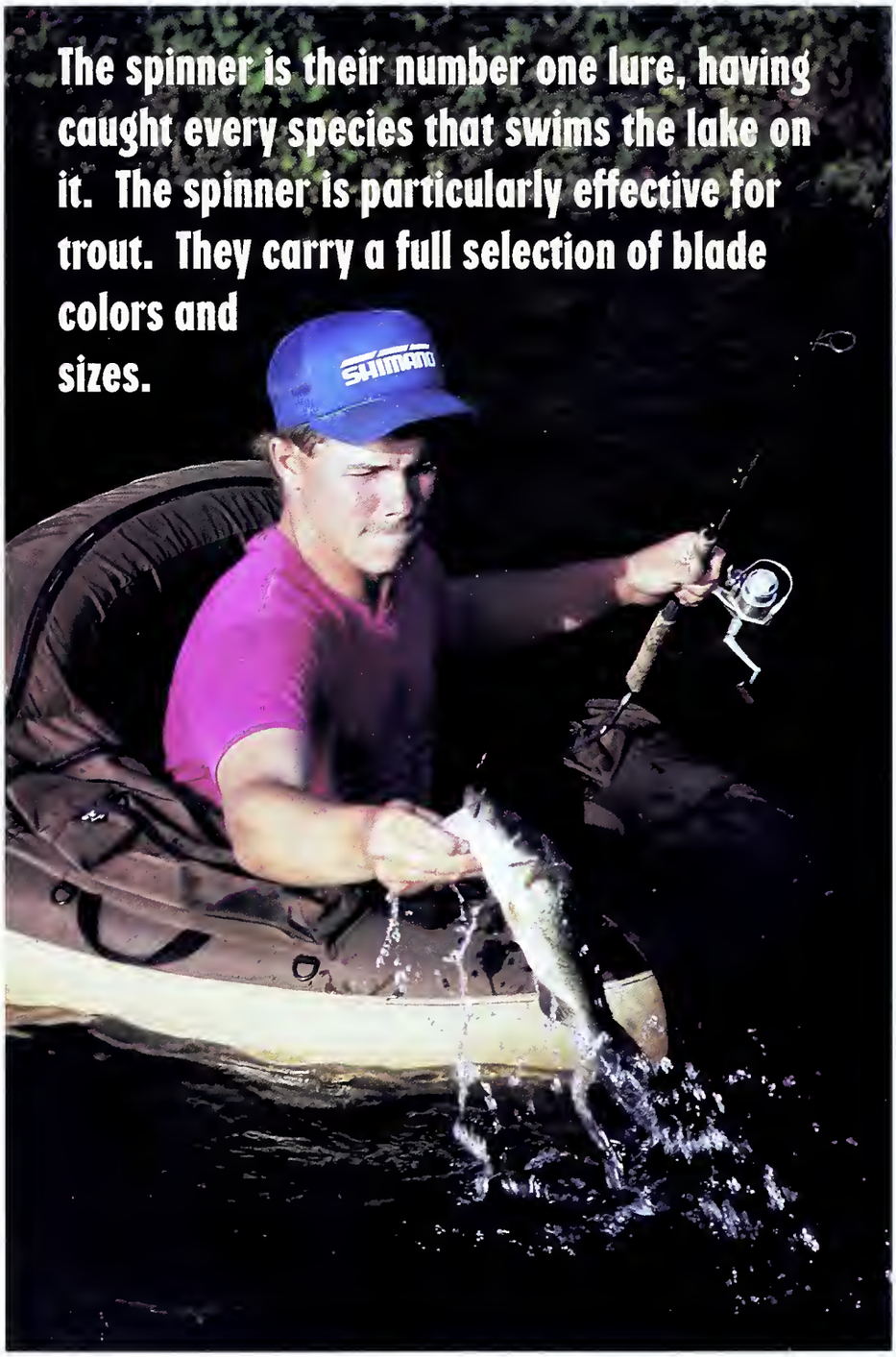
Bob quickly discovered that trout and salmon moved out beyond the range of wading anglers shortly after the sun cleared the

BELLY BOATING LAKE ERIE

horizon. Perhaps a few strikes at dawn and dusk--that is, if you were willing to spend several hours of half-hearted casting to hold your spot on the beach for a short period of fish activity.

However, the belly boat gave them a distinct edge over other anglers. First, tube fishing did not require that they arrive in the pre-dawn hours to reserve a casting site near the mouth of a tributary stream. Whenever they got there, they simply rigged up and waded into the surf a short distance from shore anglers, and kept on going.

The tubes let them move beyond the farthest casts of their competitors, where they discovered trout the others simply could not reach.



How successful have they been? Bob's office is lined with Commission Angler Awards for trophy steelhead and brown trout. In 1992 alone, Bob and Dorothy earned seven Angler Awards between them--all taken from the tubes.

Between tubing Presque Isle Bay and the main lake, this couple has caught steelhead, brown trout, lake trout, coho, white bass, walleye, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, rock bass, sunfish, catfish and freshwater drum.

"Of course, our choice of tubing location for each outing is restricted by the weather," explains Bob. "Some might think boat anglers would have more opportunities to get out. Not necessarily so. Often we are able to fish the main lake in certain breeze conditions, while boaters have a rough time farther out in the lake.

"Remember, we are fishing close to shore, so even a brisk south or southeast breeze still provides smooth water for several hundred yards off the beach. If the main lake is unsatisfactory because of northerly winds, we have the Bay. And if the Bay is too rough, we can always find a spot in the lagoons."

Seasonal opportunities

Because fishing for different species along the shore peaks at different times of the year, there is always something hitting from April to November.

The float tube season begins immediately after ice-out. This is the time for steelhead, browns, immature coho and an occasional lake trout. On weekends around the first of May, Bob has caught and released over 100 soft-rayed fish a day. Trout fishing continues in high gear through May, but walleyes are also added to the catch.

By June, walleye action tapers off. But at selected creek mouths, the steelhead and browns are still hanging around. If the lake does not warm too quickly, trout can be taken through mid-July.

"It's really important to figure out which way tributary water entering the lake is moving. A north wind pushes the stream water west, so fish west of the mouth. That's where the fish will be. We also use our hands as a sort of temperature gauge to find cooler pockets of water. Again, as the lake warms, these cooler pockets along the shore become very important," Bob says.

July has become the peak smallmouth month for Erie tubers. With the extremely clear lake conditions brought on by the zebra mussels, belly boaters have visually located rock piles in 20 to 25 feet of water 200 to 300 yards offshore at certain access sites. Only on very calm days do they venture out this far. "Looking into the deeper water from a tube is like looking at an underwater drawing," says Jay Bach, one of Bob's recent converts to Lake Erie tubing. "The rock formations have smallmouth bass positioned on them just like an artist's rendition. Part of the game is to watch your lure's path and attempt to catch a particular bass you see.

"The tuber's presence floating on the surface does not seem to bother the fish. However, if your shadow falls across the fish, they will spook. Then you move on to another rock pile."

During the late spring and summer, they fish for

photo-Dart Black

panfish in the Bay whenever the lake is too rough. Come September, however, the focus turns once again exclusively to the main lake.

A mixed bag of steelhead and coho is taken through mid-October. Then it is strictly steelhead until extremely cold weather forces them to lay up the tubes for the winter.

Belly boat preparation

How does one endure sitting in a tube surrounded by cold water in the early spring and late fall? The same way wading fishermen do--with neoprene waders. Bob, Dorothy and Jay have two sets of neoprenes. The 5mm thick waders are for very cold water, and the 3mm waders are used for summer. Fleece tops and bottoms also help insulate the anglers.

Even during the summer, the lake water is cool enough that you don't overheat in neoprene. However, in the hot weather, get out of the waders as soon as you hit the beach. Otherwise your chest-high waders turn into your own personal sauna.

Today's deluxe float tube provides zippered storage compartments, straps to hold rods, and D-rings for nets. Still, an angler cannot carry as much stuff as you can when you're in a boat. Bob and company fish with limited tackle. The spinner is their number one lure, having caught every species that swims the lake on it. The spinner is particularly effective for trout. They carry a full selection of blade colors and sizes.

"In the cold water of spring and fall, a large blade spinner, such as a number 3, 4 or 5, catches more trout. But in the warmer water these big blades put out too much vibration. That's when we throw the size 0, 1 and 2. But always fish them slowly, just fast enough to spin the blade," Bob emphasizes.

Floating Rapalas are included in their tackle when the walleyes are in the shallows in the spring, as well as when they go after bass in Presque Isle Bay. However, they have had little success with this kind of lure on trout.

A selection of leadheads and soft-plastic grubs can be found in another box. With jigs they target smallmouth bass, white bass, rock bass and sunfish.

What is it like setting a hook in a tube? "No different than if you were standing on the shore or in a boat," says Bob. "Simply snap the rod upward. The tube does not roll over or anything like that."

"However, fighting fish--well, that's a little different story. You can't maneuver quickly enough to adjust for the changes in direction that a fish makes. Many times a big trout will come straight at you, and you reel like crazy to keep up. Then maybe the fish goes under you or veers off at the last second. But you can't turn fast enough to keep up. You end up fighting the fish with a rod over the shoulder. It makes for some exciting angling."

Other times large fish tow the tube and angler around before finally tiring. Last year Dorothy was pulled into the entrance of Walnut Creek by a big steelhead. Even though she blocked boat traffic, all the boaters and anglers on shore cheered when she finally slipped her net under a 9-pound, 10-ounce steelie.

The belly boat adds another dimension to the Lake Erie fishing scene. Tube fishing is more relaxing and less tiring than wading. Still, you get considerable exercise because the tube is propelled by your legs and feet.

Tubes offer greater mobility for the fisherman without the expense and hassle of a boat. It provides anglers access to an area of water that is too deep for waders to reach and too shallow for boats to risk. And as a few innovative anglers have proven, this former no-man's strip can hold a lot of fish.

Belly boats can provide a whole new perspective to a fishing experience, too.

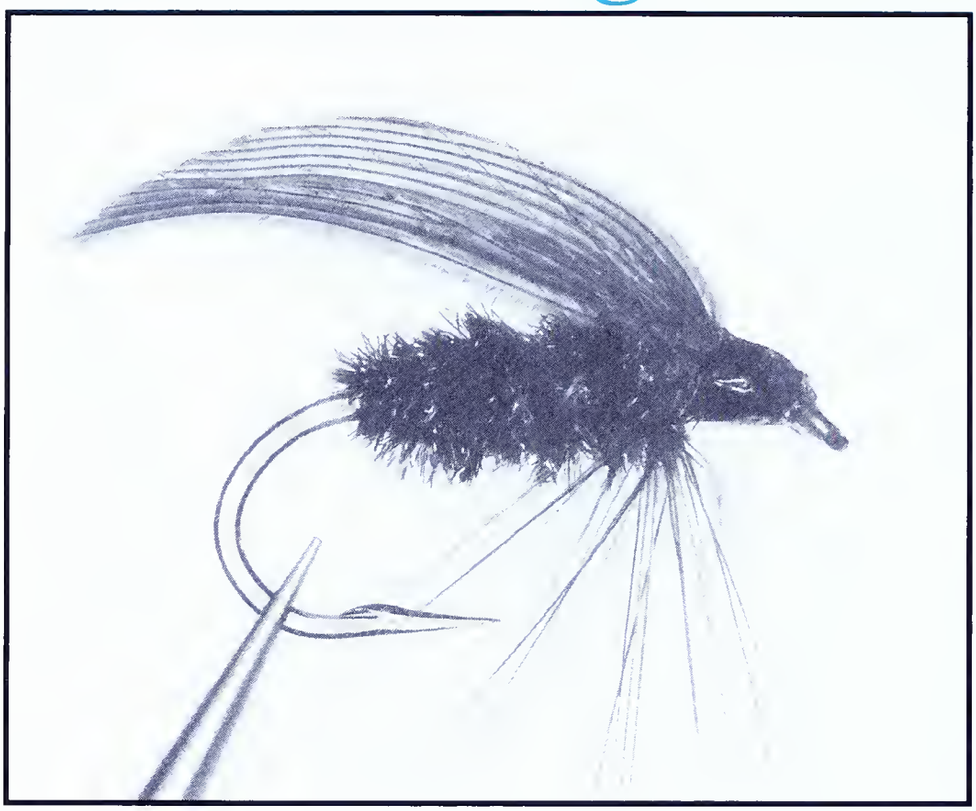
"Offshore in the early morning just as the sun is coming up is an incredible view," says Jay. "Sitting so near the waterline, the belly boat offers you a look you have never seen before. The panoramic view of the cliffs and sparkling water is absolutely gorgeous. Sometimes I don't even fish, but just sit and watch the shoreline."



Safety Guidelines

- Never go alone. Fish with at least one partner. A third person in the party is even better.
- Use only float tubes that have at least two air bladders in separate compartments--a requirement on Commission lakes but not on Lake Erie. A three-bladder tube with high backrest is more comfortable and has an extra margin of safety.
- Be certain the air bladders are not leaking and the nylon shell and seat straps are not torn or badly worn at stress points.
- Always wear a life jacket. Commission lakes require a Coast Guard Approved PFD. Some tubers opt for a CO2 inflatable vest, which is nonbinding to wear. However, these are not legal on Commission lakes.
- Never attempt tubing Lake Erie unless the weather forecast is completely favorable. Generally, this means southerly winds below 10 knots.
- How far to venture from shore is a subjective call, based on the fitness of each member of your party. Bob says 100 yards puts you in position for great trout fishing during the spring, early summer and fall. Beyond 250 or 300 yards is probably getting into the fool-hearty range.
- Keep alert to weather changes. If the wind begins to increase or shifts direction, head to shore while you have time and energy.
- A float tube will not upset in choppy water. However, attempting to come ashore with a strong onshore wind can be dangerous. The waves lift you up and then drive your legs into the bottom. Injuries may occur if you're not careful. Also, an onshore wind doesn't push you in a straight line. A tuber ends up perhaps 100 yards or more down the beach from where you first expect to hit shore.
- Carry a whistle as an attention-getting device. Also carry a Coast Guard approved signal kit in one of the tube compartments.--*DB*.

The Leadwing Coachman



by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author

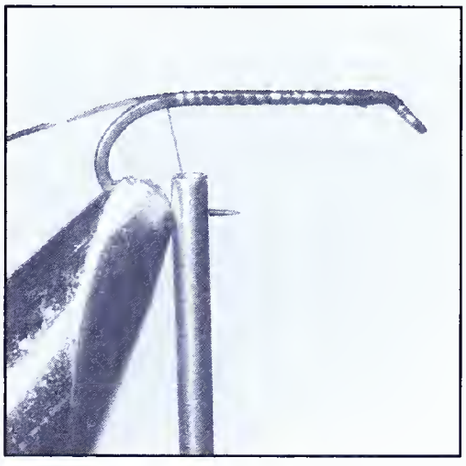
Most flies--both wet and dry--may be classified as either simulators or attractors. The former represent specific insects or other food forms with which fish are acquainted. The latter offer more generalized suggestions of edibles. Of the family of Coachman flies, only the Leadwing may be considered a simulator pattern, representing the *Isonychia* mayflies. It is also the youngest member of the Coachman clan. On the other hand, the Royal Coachman is perhaps the best-known and most popular of all attractor flies. Both have earned their niches in fly fishing and occupy stalls in the boxes of most anglers.

I learned of the wet fly version of the Leadwing Coachman on my initial visit to Slate Run, Lycoming County, some 45 years ago. Fishing had slowed somewhat under a bright afternoon sun, and I had taken a break to watch the water from a shaded spot alongside the pretty stream. Soon another angler waded into view, and spotting me, he came over to share my log. We chatted at length and I found he was a veteran angler from Jersey Shore, but regretfully, I never learned his name.

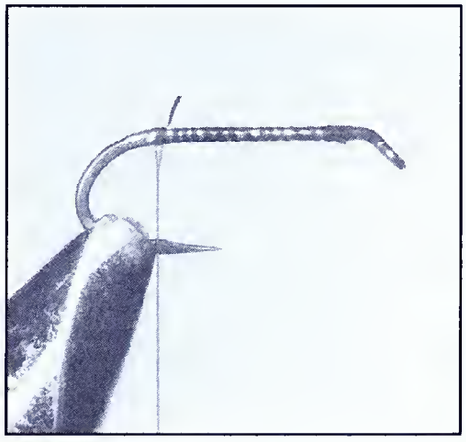
Eventually, our conversation turned to flies and he pulled from his jacket the

Dressing: Leadwing Coachman

Hook: Size 10 or 12, wet fly type.
Thread: Black 6/0 prewaxed.
Tag: Single strand of gold Flashabou.
Body: Peacock herl.
Hackle: Chocolate brown, preferably webby and soft.
Wings: Paired sections of slate-colored goose primaries.



1 Tie in the thread behind the eye and wind it in spaced turns to the bend. Tie in the Flashabou at the bend.



2 For the tag, wind the Flashabou down around the bend three turns. Then reverse direction and wind over the first layer. Tie off at the front of the tag and trim the excess.



3 Tie in five or six peacock herls by their tips, in front of the tag. Trim the excess. Hold the herls together and wrap with thread in spaced turns.

largest wet fly box I had ever seen. About half the contents consisted of an assortment of the usual patterns one would expect the typical angler to carry, in sizes appropriate for most streams. But the remainder of the flies were huge--size 8s, 6s and even 4s--and most were Leadwing Coachman patterns.

Seeing the look of surprise on my face, my new friend explained that the big flies were reserved for night fishing. He related that he and several friends regularly fished Pine Creek after dark, concentrating near the mouths of such coldwater feeder streams as Cedar Run and Slate Run. On the blackest nights they took brown trout of a size rarely seen during daylight hours. A cast of three large wet flies was the rule, and the two flies on droppers were constantly changed until a winning combination was found.

What about the point fly? "Use any point fly you want," he said. Then, with a grin, he added, "As long as it's a Leadwing Coachman!" Then he removed a photo from his wallet, showing himself holding a large brown trout--of a size that required both hands to hold horizontally. I was impressed.

Of course, the Leadwing Coachman is more than a night pattern. In sizes 12 and 10 it accounts for many trout during daylight hours, particularly when *Isonychia* mayflies are emerging. In streams with boulders, logs or other objects protruding from the surface, the nymphs of *Isonychia* generally crawl out of the water onto such projections and emerge to the dun stage in the air. This method of emergence is similar to that of many stoneflies.

Because the nymphs tend to congregate around these projections before emergence, fishing the Leadwing is often productive there. Find the food supply and you generally find the trout. However, in streams lacking protrusions for the nymphs to climb into, *Isonychia* nymphs are perfectly capable of emerging at the surface like most mayflies.

As with most wet flies, the Leadwing's hook should be a heavier gauge than that of typical dry fly hooks. Most hook manufacturers produce special wet fly hooks designed not to carry the fly deeply into swift water but to provide entry quickly through the surface film--an important feature. Typical examples are Mustad's 7948A and Tiemco's 3769.

Many fly dressers insist on bronze peacock herl for patterns calling for herl bodies, but this hue is sometimes difficult to obtain. For the Leadwing, the typical dark-green herl works just fine, but don't be stingy with it. Use five or six strands to form a dense body.

Much has been made of the near-miraculous state of gear available to the modern fly-fisher, and there's no question that tackle has reached a level undreamed of a half-century ago. But I wonder if we don't become so caught up in high-tech that we sometimes forget to relax and enjoy ourselves.

For a change of pace when there's a lull in the fishing, try bending on a Leadwing Coachman--or a trio of wets if you wish--and make a slow, easy cast across-stream. Let your rod tip follow the path of the fly as it drifts downstream, and when it hangs in the current directly below you, bring it back with a slow hand-twist retrieve. Pause now and then to jiggle the rod tip, making the fly dance erratically in place. Quietly take a step or two downstream and repeat the whole routine. Forget you're using a lightning-fast graphite rod capable of throwing tight loops. It will accommodate slow casting as well. And above all, avoid false-casting, which cracks the moisture from the fly and makes it difficult to sink.

You'll soon slip into a rhythm that's almost mesmerizing, and you may be surprised at the number of trout showing an interest. It's like turning back the pages of an old book, and best of all, you'll find you have time to stop and "smell the roses."



4 *Hold the herls and thread together and wind forward to form a dense body. Tie off the herls 1/8-inch behind the eye and trim the excess.*



5 *Select a hackle with barbules as long as 2 times the hook's gape. Tie in the stem at the fore end of the body and wind two turns. Tie it off and trim the excess.*



6 *Cut matched sections from a right and left goose primary wing feather. Hold the sections together with the concave surfaces inside. Hold in place with a pinch grip and tie in as shown. After trimming the excess wing butts and whip-finishing the head, apply head lacquer.*

My Rude Awakening

by Chris Cleaver

As the old saying goes, " Once you leave home, you can never come back." But I never really cared much about old sayings. Seven years of active duty in the Air Force had left me well-rounded and well-traveled, but my fishing skills were allotted little time for improvement.

Even so, there were special moments, especially living in England. Spending my weekends chasing trout from one end of the island to the other and having the opportunity to fish some of England's most famous waters is something I'll never forget. Fishing the famed Test, walking down a historic beat on Lord Mountbatten's estate and casting for large brown trout, was a once-in-a-lifetime thrill. So also was traveling to Scotland's River Tay, teasing Atlantic salmon into striking brightly colored salmon flies. I also fished the majestic lake district, standing beside centuries-old buildings double hauling for landlocked salmon and trout.

Fishing England's streams and lakes was nothing less than a privilege. I especially felt this way after footing the bill for what the Brits call, "a day of good sport."

English trout fishing is a pay-as-you-go venture and it can be expensive. Open water is virtually non-existent. All streams are private. A day of trout fishing on a good stream can run $50--that's one day. A one-day beat on the Test costs over $100. And the price for a week of salmon fishing in Scotland could buy me a round-trip ticket home to Pennsylvania and a shopping spree at the local tackle shop. Nevertheless, I still enjoyed every chance I had to fish in the tradition-rich English streams.

I spent many afternoons streamside sipping tea and telling my British counterparts that, unlike here, most water in America is open to anyone. For example, in my home state one could grab a rod, head to a stream and trout fish pretty much unbothered. All you need is an inexpensive (especially by British standards) fishing license. Telling an Englishman this is like telling your six-year-old that the candy store is a non-profit organization. You get the same starry-eyed effect.

As it goes with many good things, my tour in England ended, and shortly thereafter, my military commitment. I left behind an open invitation to my British fishing friends to visit America for "a day of good sport." Hopefully, some day they will.

My return home was three weeks before the opening of trout season. I figured it couldn't work out better. My father lives in a quiet home on Fishing Creek in Columbia County. It's an average stream, but I could always find plenty of fish. Besides, I was returning to the water I grew up on and fished daily for over a dozen years--where, as a child, I learned the wily ways of the trout and the lessons about life that fishing can teach you. And someday I'll pass on those same pleasures to my family.

I was in for a rude awakening. After a quick and polite chat with my father, I headed out for a short stroll to reacquaint myself with familiar surroundings. Ah, home again, I thought. Cheering songbirds chased away the heaviness of winter, and the sun's ever-higher course directed arching beams deeply into the stream's darkened pools.

It was all very exciting. Gently I plodded down the steep bank, between large rocks that contained Fishing Creek. I found a comfortable stone that fit my backside and I slide into a ringside seat. The stream looked much the same as I had remembered. Heavy rapids at the beginning of the pool curved sharply into deeper water. There a labyrinth of currents flowed between large boulders deep in the center of the stream. The pool then flattened out in front of me and gently rippled into the next pool.

I zipped my jacket up high and tucked my chin under my collar as the March breeze slid over the cold water. It felt more like winter now. But that didn't seem to matter to the hundreds of small black stone flies climbing the rocks and dancing in the whirling pools. It didn't take long before I noticed several fish feeding on the stone flies.

I reminisced with warm thoughts of summers passed and the many exciting evenings spent fishing the Hendrickson and Sulphur hatches to holdover browns that seemed to fill the pools when these hatches appeared. Also, I felt the stirring anticipation of the season to come. This year was going to be a special one for many reasons--my return home to the water I grew up on, a chance to fish with my family, and an opportunity to teach a newcomer fly fishing--my beautiful wife. Yes, it was going to be a special year.

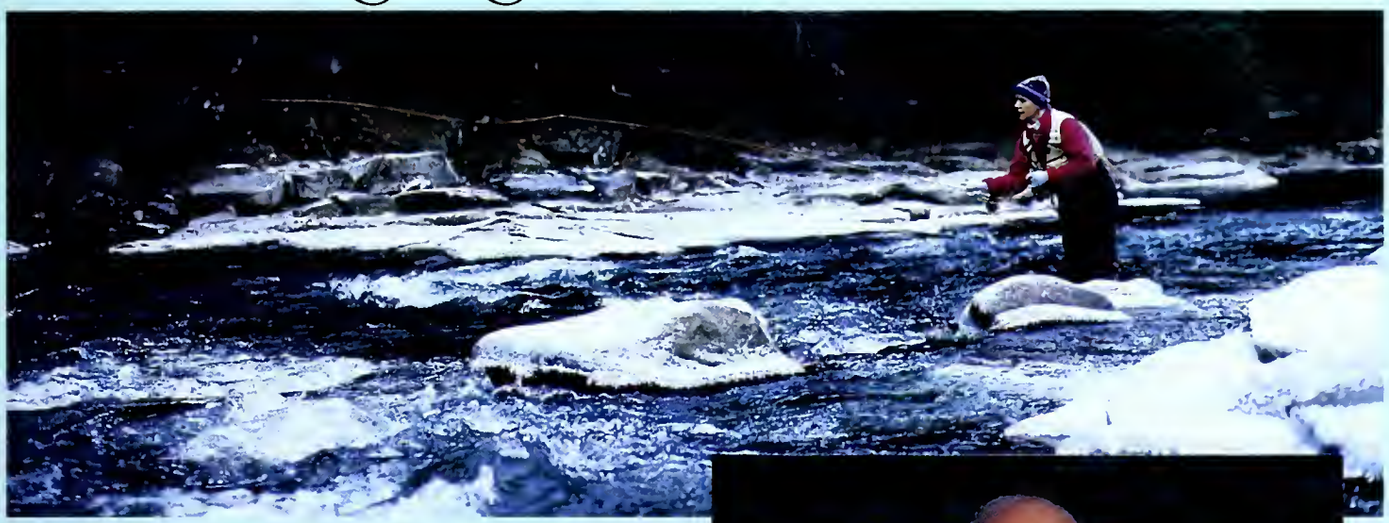
Even the coziest rock seat gets uncomfortable after a while. So I climbed back up the bank to get a view of the pool. Turning upstream I immediately noticed something out of place. At the beginning of the rapids the stream was hidden by a heavy white birch stand, but I could just barely make out something across the stream. I had to walk upstream 100 yards or so to see up into the rapids. As I rounded the small bend I noticed a wire across the stream--and attached to the wire, a "no trespassing" sign.

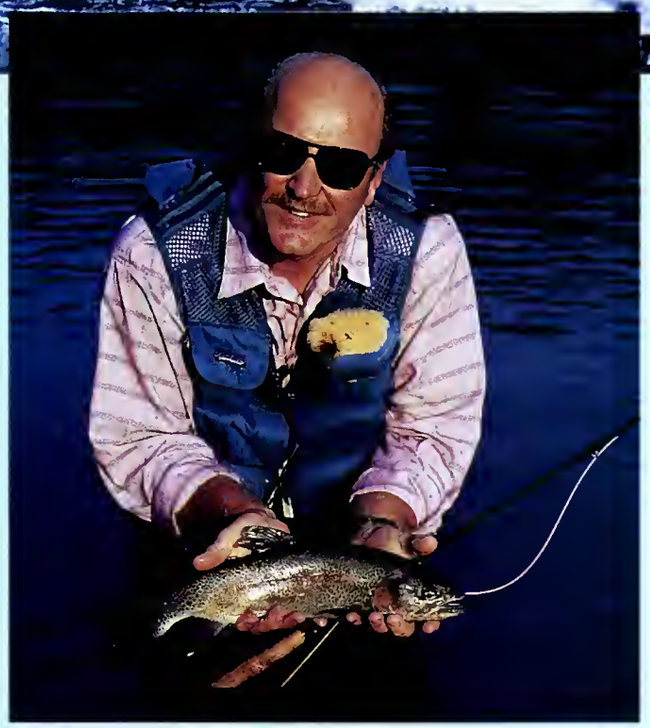
I couldn't really say what emotion I felt first. It's like remembering your thoughts the moment before you squeezed the trigger on your first buck. No matter how hard you try, you just can't remember. But I do remember sitting down in disbelief, thinking that this was impossible. I had lived here most of my life, and now a wire and a sign could stop me from fishing? Someone else saw the beauty of these pools, but was bitten by the greed of "all mine."

Unfortunately, this may be the way of the future. I spoke with several legislators and Commission officials. All say that private water in on the rise dramatically throughout the state. The time of the $50 per day ticket for trout fishing might be in the near future, robbing many the opportunity to wet a line.

Sitting on the bank, still shaking my head, I thought about England--about the private water and the prices. But what really stuck out was the starry-eyed glow I saw in my fellow anglers when I told them that streams in America were open for anyone. I didn't have much room for a starry-eyed glow.

Encouraging Public Access





The Fish and Boat Commission strongly encourages landowners to leave waters that flow through their properties open for free public use. Sportsmen play a vital role in keeping Pennsylvania's waters open. Landowners who post their streams often point to littering, over-crowding and behavior problems as the causes for posting. Anglers and boaters who respect private property, are courteous and grateful to the landowners who let them fish and boat, and leave the land as they found it can do more than any law or program in encouraging landowners to permit free public access to their waters.

In today's litigious society, landowners sometimes express concerns about liability when asked to permit the public to use their lands and waters. The Pennsylvania General Assembly has addressed this problem through the Recreational Use of Land and Waters Act of 1966. This law limits landowner liability for claims resulting from recreational use of their properties as long as the landowner doesn't charge a fee for use of the property. This law has been very effective in protecting landowners and encouraging them to allow free public use of their lands and waters.

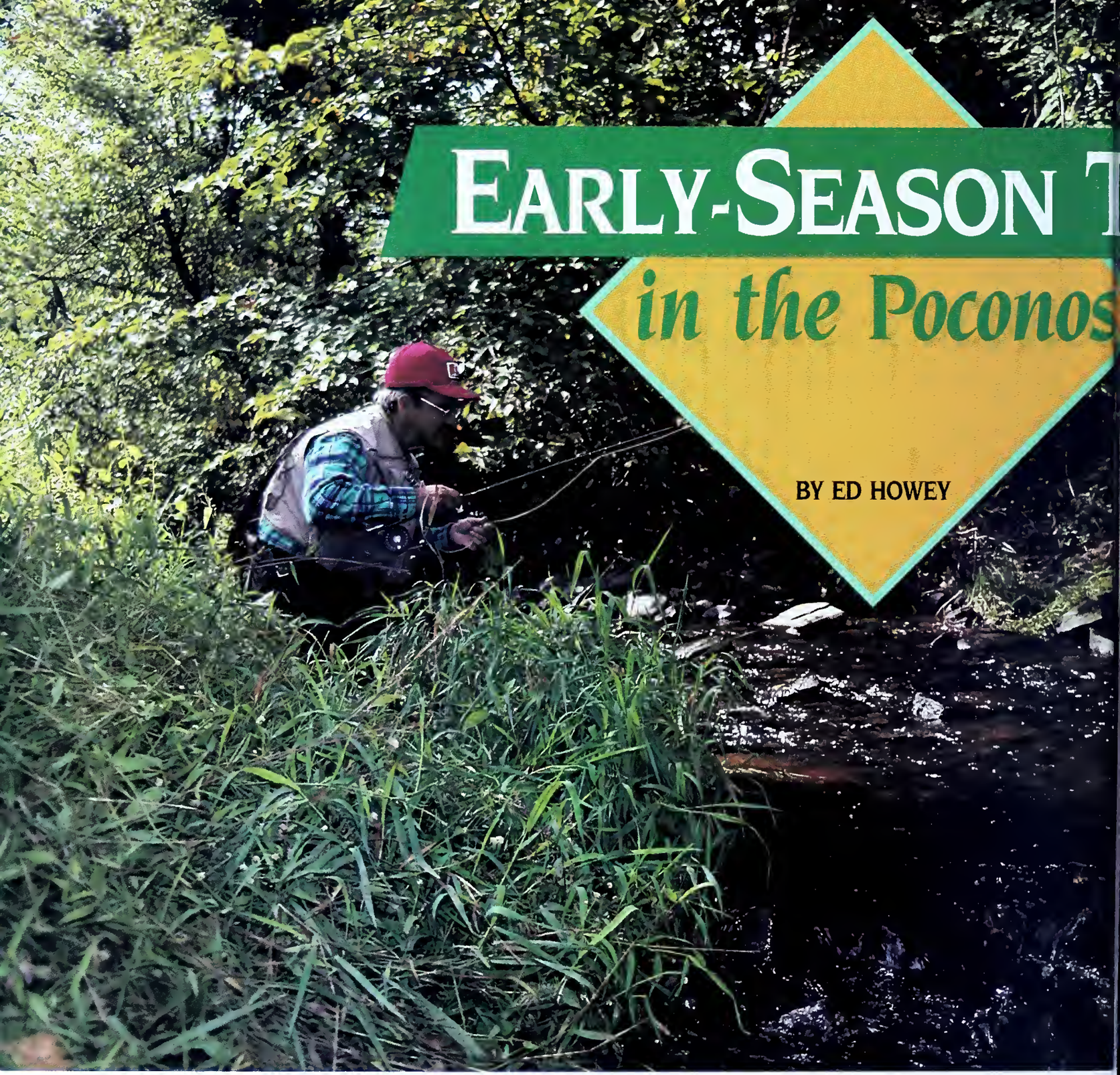
On the other hand, landowners who "privatize" and charge fees for use of their lands and waters enjoy no protections against liability. The costs of additional insurance coverage or of paying claims may well outweigh any earnings the landowner receives from charging for use of the property.

The Fish and Boat Commission has other programs to encourage free public use of lands and waters. The Commission's Adopt-a-Stream program provides assistance for stream improvement projects in return for a commitment to leave lands and waters open for free public use.

Landowners sometimes want streams flowing through their properties to be managed under special fishing regulations. Special regulation protections are available only to streams open to public use. In addition, under Pennsylvania law, the Commission, the U.S. government and the cooperative nurseries can stock fish only in waters open for free public use. If waters are posted, they will not be stocked.

The subject of public rights in Pennsylvania waters is a complicated one. As a general rule, the public has the right to fish and boat on the navigable waters of the Commonwealth. Landowners whose properties adjoin navigable streams do not have a legal right to forbid the public from fishing and boating in those streams. However, the public has no right to cross a landowner's upland property above the high waterline to get to a navigable stream or river.

Pennsylvania has no comprehensive list of its navigable waters. The determination of whether a stream qualifies as navigable waters of the Commonwealth often is difficult. Historical evidence, legislative enactments from the early days of Pennsylvania, and scientific information may be useful in making this determination. Neither the Fish and Boat Commission nor the Department of Environmental Resources is authorized to make navigability determinations. As a result, parties disputing the navigability of a particular stream or river may have to go to court, which can be an expensive and time-consuming process.--*Dennis T. Guise, Esq., Commission Chief Counsel.*



EARLY-SEASON T
in the Poconos

BY ED HOWEY

Wild trout in the Poconos? "No way!" most would say, and such skeptics might be justified, but the truth is that sections of 20 of the region's streams are currently classified either Wild Trout--Class A or Wilderness Trout quality.

An example? How about Carbon County's inaptly named Mud Run, a stream recently added (1993) to the list of Class A waters? Though it flows through public land in Hickory Run State Park, the challenges of this 2.5-mile stretch of flies-only water start with simply getting there, but anglers who make it can find a place beyond the crowds.

After exiting I-80 at PA 534, follow PA 534 for some 9 miles into the park until the Turnpike overpass comes into view (roughly the mid-point of the regulated stretch). A sign in the parking area points the way to the water. From here access is on foot by way of steep hiking trails down into a narrow gorge at the bottom of which lies this jewel of a trout stream. Public water terminates at signs posting the upper limit of private club property.

Over the years the area encompassed by the term "Poconos" has expanded as roadways have improved. For our purposes, consider the region to include: All of Monroe County; Carbon County from the Lehigh River east; and Pike County south of the Lackawaxen River between Hawley and the Delaware. Given this definition, an angler staying at any campground or motel in the region needs no more than 90 minutes of driving time to reach any Pocono water. Surprisingly, within this limit lie upwards of 300 miles of trout water, enough to afford anglers plenty of elbow room.





Pocono streams

Sticking to Carbon County, several other small creeks tributary to the Lehigh River offer early season opportunities. Drakes Creek, a few miles south of Mud Run in State Gamelands 141, receives pre-season and in-season stocking as does the upper section of Stony Creek. Both require some walking to reach the stocked water. Observe all posting signs and do nothing to wear out your welcome.

Another fine stream in Hickory Run State Park is Hickory Run itself, which is designated catch and release, artificial lures only for about 1.5 miles up from its mouth at the Lehigh River south of Lehigh Tannery. No roads track this stream. A parking area just off PA 534 near the park office is the starting point for a trail leading to the water.

Hickory Run is managed as a Class A Wild Trout stream, so the nice browns and brookies you hook here, sometimes running 12 inches and better, are natives. Release them carefully so they'll have a chance to produce more wild trout for another day.

Still in Carbon County, Pohopoco Creek below Beltzville Dam is a tailwater fishery that sometimes yields lunker browns. Local roads off US 209 and PA 248 provide access to the stream. Aquashicola Creek upstream from the inflow of Buckwha Creek near Little Gap is public water. A sand and gravel bottom fosters insect life, and a canopy of overhanging brush and trees helps keep the water temperature down. Those who prefer spinning with bait or lures have an easier time than fly fishers here.

Other trout streams in the Carbon County sector include Hunters Creek, tributary to Buckwha Creek near Little Gap; Black Creek, a small Class A Wild Trout stream tributary to the Lehigh River south of White Haven; and Fourth Run, tributary to Black Creek about a mile up from its mouth.

In the Poconos you can find upwards of 300 miles of trout water, enough to afford anglers plenty of elbow room.

Moving eastward from Carbon County takes us into Monroe County, home of many famous streams. Today almost 100 miles of streams in Monroe County are managed for public angling, much of it on waters with names that echo down the corridors of angling history.



Early-Season Trout in the Poconos

Almost 100 miles of streams in Monroe County are managed for public angling, much of it on waters with names that echo down the corridors of angling history.

One that echoes loudest is Brodhead Creek. The section open to the public starts just above Analomink where S.R. 1002 crosses the stream. From here for 8 miles downstream to the first railroad bridge above the Delaware River the stream benefits from a generous stocking program. The appearance of the channelized stretch just below Analomink puts off some persnickety anglers, but according to Thom Rivell, proprietor of the Fly Fishing Tackle Shop in Cresco, Fish and Boat Commission stream electrofishing on this section has turned up brown trout in numbers and size that would raise the eyebrows of skeptics.

From the S.R. 1002 bridge downstream, access is available to the channelized stretch off PA 191 and PA 447. Good fishing continues in runs and pools down past Stokes Avenue where the stream enters more developed areas, but careful planning can help you discover local roads to the water. Several tributaries add volume just above the first I-80 overpass where the Brodhead enters a steep-sided gorge on the last leg of its trip to the Delaware. Angler reports indicate that brown trout do very well in this stretch of big water. Ray "Peewee" Serfass, long-time Pocono resident and an excellent Delaware River guide, maintains that the Brodhead Creek between the two I-80 bridges offers anglers a shot at some truly big brown trout. Ray's advice: Fish deep with hellgrammites.

To the west of Stroudsburg a group of streams combines to join the Brodhead Creek in town. Farthest west of these, Appenzel Creek holds plenty of water for stocked trout. The Appenzel/Neola Road off PA 715 follows the stream to provide pull-off access at a number of places above and below the posted stretch. Below Neola and the Pinewoods Picnic Area provides a place to park for walk-in access.

Appenzell Creek joins McMichaels Creek near Snydersville, just west of the PA 33/US 209 divergence. From here down to the confluence with the Brodhead there is reasonable access to McMichaels despite several stretches of posted water. The area off Manor Road near Pleasant Valley Manor and the county jail is a good place to start. Overhanging brush bedevils the long rod fisherman on this stream, so spinning may be more productive.

Pocono Creek originates near the Camelback ski area and flows southeast roughly following I-80 toward its junction with McMichaels in Stroudsburg. The best access is from PA 725 and US 611 near Tannersville.

Class A Wild Trout Waters	Wilderness Trout Waters
Monroe County:	
Devils Hole Cr./Mt. Pocono	Devils Hole Cr.
Poplar Run/Canadensis	Laurel Run
Dotters Cr./Kresgeville	Rattllesnake Cr.
Singer Run/Tobyhanna	Sand Spring Run
Wolf Swamp Run	
Cross Keys Run	
Frame Cabin Run	
Carbon County:	
Black Cr./White Haven	Deep Run
Hickory Run/White Haven	First Hollow Cr.
Mud Run/Hickory Run Park	Hall Cr
	Little Bear Cr.
	Stony Cr.
Pike County:	
Bushkill Cr./Millrift	

Continuing Commission studies and waterway evaluations result in constant revision of these lists.--*EH*.

Maps

Nothing ruins a fishing outing more thoroughly than arriving in the general vicinity of a stream and then not being able to find the water. Scout new water beforehand using good maps. Excellent maps for finding your way through both wilderness and suburbs are the Type 3 County General Highway Maps, which show waters and all roads open to public use. Obtain them from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation General Sales Store, P. O. Box 2028, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Call for price information at (717) 787-6747.

The Lehigh Gorge State Park Map and the Hickory Run State Park Map can be obtained from the Bureau of State Parks, P. O. Box 1467, Harrisburg, PA 17120. Some tackle stores carry detailed maps. Check them out.--*EH*.

In the extreme southwest corner of Monroe County, Buckwha Creek and its tributary Princess Run provide early season opportunities. Follow local roads out of Kunkletown and Fiddletown to gain access. Some hiking is required to reach these waterways.

From Kresgeville on US 209, Pohopoco Creek is stocked for 8 miles upstream to the village of Effort. PA 115 crosses the stream near Effort as does US 209 near Kresgeville. Local roads provide access at a number of bridges along the 8-mile stretch.

Northeast of the Stroudsburgs along US 209, three well-known Pocono streams offer open water. The tannic acid-tinted Big Bushkill Creek wanders some 12 miles from the Pike County line downstream to the Delaware. Six miles of flies-only water on the Resica Falls Scout Reservation draw crowds of early season fly fishermen. PA 402 crosses the stream near the entrance to the scout camp. Anglers should stop at the headquarters store here to obtain a season permit. No fee is specified, but all donations are appreciated. From a nearby parking area anglers can walk a short path down to the lower end of the flies-only section. To reach the upper end of the restricted stretch, drive back over the PA 402 bridge and take the first right onto Firestone Road, which follows the creek. About 1 1/2 to 2 miles up, park at roadside and walk a trail down to the stream. This entire upper section presents Big Bushkill at its scenic best.

Below Resica Falls, access to the stream demands some strenuous hiking, an aspect which, according to Thom Rivell, results in uncrowded angling even in the early weeks of the season. At the town of Bushkill the stream can be reached from local roads, but again, hiking is required to reach waters upstream from the town. The final leg of Big Bushkill flows through the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, a generously stocked segment.

Little Bushkill Creek, from its confluence with Big Bushkill near the village, offers about 2 miles of approved water upstream to posted club water. Farther upstream another stocked section provides early season angling. This stretch, about 1 1/2 miles long, lies on state forest land between the lower limit of the Lehman Lake club property and the upper limit of the Little Bushkill Club stretch. Follow Bushkill Falls Road out of the village and Pine Ridge Road beyond the Tamiment resort.

About 3 miles north of Bushkill, in southeastern Pike County, Toms Creek crosses US 209 on its way to the Delaware. This once privately held water has been designated catch and release, artificial lures only. About 2 miles of this stream lie within the National Recreation Area, where Factory Road and Hemlock Grove Road provide access. Park, picnic and fish from the Toms Creek Picnic Area.

In the northwest corner of Monroe County, one of the area's best early season streams, Tobyhanna Creek, flows westward out of Tobyhanna Lake. The first 7 miles of this stream from the lake downstream to the vicinity of Kistler Run are generously stocked. From the lake to US 611 the stream passes through a built-up area but can be reached from Lakeside Drive, which roughly parallels the stream. Beyond US 611, Tobyhanna enters a swampy woodland domain. PA 423 follows the stream to the west, and there are places to park, but no matter where you find a place you will still be faced with a pretty good hike. Deep in the woods, a one-mile stretch from Still Swamp Run down to the PP&L service bridge is restricted to delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only regulations.

In the southeast corner of Pike County, the stretch of Saw Creek from the downstream limit of the Porter's Lake Club property to the upstream postings of the Saw Creek Club is public water. Use PA 402 north from Resica Falls to find this water. Moving to the north, a section of Shohola Creek in State Gamelands 180, near the PA 739 interchange on I-80, carries early season stocked trout as does Decker Creek from US 6 to the boundary of State Gamelands 183, near the stream's confluence with the Lackawaxen River at Kimbles.

Not yet mentioned are the boundary waters of the Pocono region--the Lehigh River to the west, the Lackawaxen River to the north, and the Delaware River to the east. Although local anglers occasionally tie into large trout in the Delaware, especially at the places where stocked streams enter, prime Delaware River trout water lies to the north of our Pocono boundary. This is not true, however, of the other two rivers.

The Lackawaxen River from Hawley east to the Delaware is big water. This 15-mile stretch receives copious stockings preseason and twice inseason. Bait and lure fishing with spinning tackle is especially effective here early in the season. Light lines in the 4-pound to 6-pound range with sizes 6 to 10 gold or silver spinner blades are most effective.

PA 590 follows the stream from Lackawaxen westward to Rowland, and from there to Hawley local roads off PA 590 provide access. The Lackawaxen is considerably bigger than average Pocono trout streams and is difficult to wade. Wading anglers must be alert for rapidly rising water during releases from Lake Wallenpaupack.

In his comprenhesive book, *Pennsylvania Trout Streams and Their Hatches, Angler* contributor Charles Meck says that the "Lehigh has returned" to its glory days of the 1930s and 1940s. And indeed, steadily improving water quality has heralded the return of insect populations and spawning activity to the river.

The Lehigh can be viewed as two streams--the section above Francis E. Walter Reservoir, and the section below the dam. Above the reservoir local folks commonly refer to the stream as "The Little Lehigh," reflecting the fact that it is indeed much smaller water than the river below. Stocked water on the upper section begins at the outflow of West End Pond near Gouldsboro in Wayne County. From here downstream to Thornhurst, access is available from local roads that follow the river. Look for "fishing permitted" signs. From Thornhurst down to the reservoir, private, posted land makes access difficult.

Below the dam the Lehigh is big water ranging from a width of 50 to 60 feet near the dam to more than 100 feet downstream. It is swift and rocky, demanding the utmost care in wading, especially in the Lehigh Gorge section below White Haven. Catchable-sized trout are stocked in the spring from the dam downstream to Sandy Run. In this same stretch, a fall fingerling stocking program is under way, a method that has produced excellent results in the Little Juniata River. As Meck has pointed out, effective use of the bottom release capability of the dam might produce a great fishery in this stretch of the Lehigh.

Lehigh access ranges from easy--from the picnic area at the dam--to quite difficult--by way of the rough road along Drakes Creek. In between and downstream, resourceful anglers find ways to get onto the water with the help of maps and advice from local tackle shops.

Stillwater option

Those who would rather sit in a boat than stand in waders have a good variety to choose from. Beltzville Lake is very large, Fairview Lake and Tobyhanna Lake are good-sized, and Little Mud Pond at 26 acres is just that.

Don't Attack Fish with Your Lures or Flies

by Lefty Kreh



One of the major reasons why most fishermen using artificial lures or flies fail to catch fish is that they do not realize the importance of how the lure or fly should approach the fish. The lure or fly should approach the fish not in an attack manner. It should come to the fish as it would in a natural environment.

Let me cite one example of how this principle works. I fished with an experienced freshwater angler last year at Christmas Island, in the South Pacific. Because of the huge numbers of bonefish found there, this is perhaps the best place in the world to learn how to catch bonefish. There are days when anglers see well over 1,000 bonefish, usually in singles, doubles or small schools. This gives the angler an opportunity to observe the reactions of fish to lures and flies.

Inching our way across one of these flats, my friend and I saw three bonefish approaching, swimming very close together. They were going to pass slightly to our right as they headed for a nearby channel. When they were about 35 feet away, my companion made a cast that dropped the fly four feet beyond and about six feet in front of them. He started to retrieve. Suddenly all three bonefish flushed wildly and tore off into the channel's safety.

What happened was typical of what I see occurring so many times. Even after repeated failures, few anglers seem to know what went wrong. Usually, the cast is delivered so quietly that the fish doesn't spook. The lure or fly drops exactly where the fisherman wanted it to. And it is fairly evident that the fish didn't see the angler.

Yet, a basic principle of retrieve had been violated. On that day on the Christmas Island flat, the angler made this same presentation several times--each time frightening the bonefish. He threw only a few feet in front and just past the cruising fish. The retrieve brought the fly toward the fish, but when it got close to them, the fish had already moved so far forward that the fly was retrieved from an angle behind the bonefish. This was an unnatural approach of an imitation of a prey species moving toward a predator, so the fish instinctively fled.

No lure or fly should ever be retrieved so that the predator thinks it is being attacked. Predators chase and eat their prey. Never in the natural environment does a crayfish pick a fight with a smallmouth bass, nor does a baitfish chase a trout. When this happens, the reaction of the predator is to back off or just leave. Predators expect to see their prey (or the lure or fly) act in a natural manner. When it doesn't, strikes aren't forthcoming.

Whenever you present a lure or fly to a fish, the fly must be retrieved so that it behaves as all other prey behaves that the fish consumes. More important than the type of lure or fly, its color, size or its sink rate, is that a fly be retrieved in a natural manner.

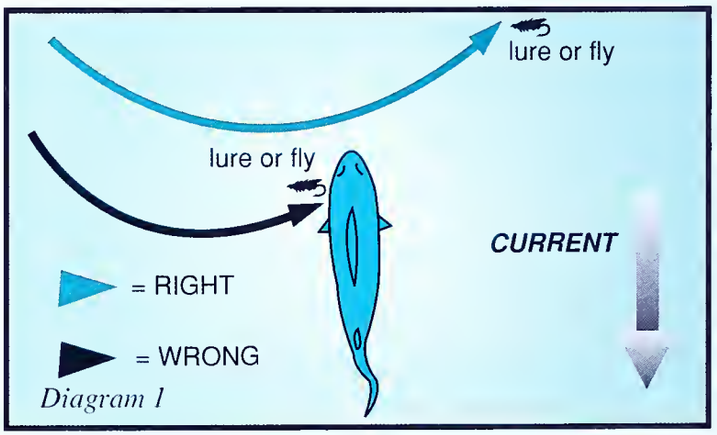
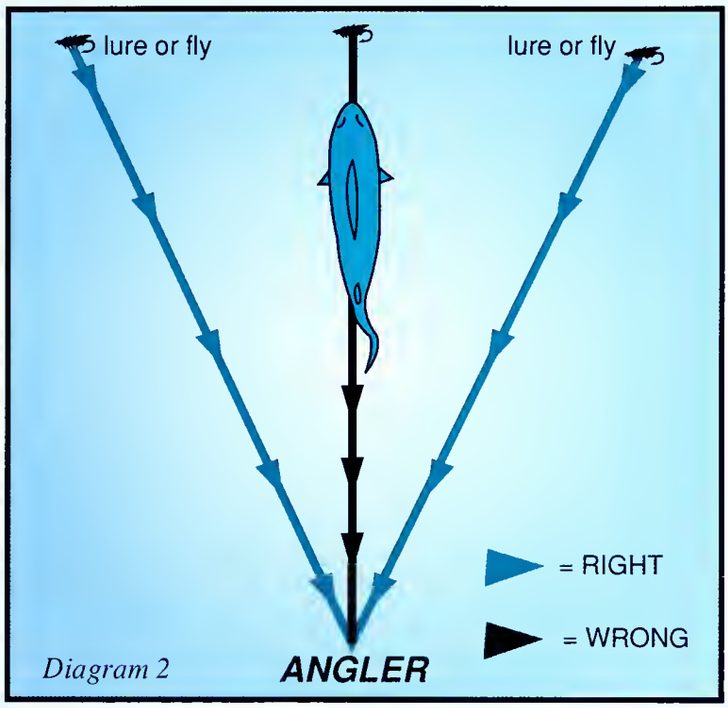


Diagram 1

The best and most natural retrieve where there is current is to throw the lure or fly far enough ahead of the fish so that on the retrieve the offering comes down and just before it gets to the fish, it sweeps in a curve as shown. If the lure is not thrown far enough ahead of the fish, it may approach the fish from behind and appear to be attacking the fish.

photo-Lefty Kreh; graphics- Ted Walke



If a fish is ahead of you and facing away, cast beyond the fish and off a little to one side, and then retrieve the lure. The fish will think the fly or lure is trying to sneak by unseen and will strike. Don't cast directly in front of the fish and retrieve the lure. Then the offering appears to be attacking the fish.

Consider some examples. A typical situation is where the angler sees a fish ahead of him. What most fishermen do is place the lure or fly directly ahead of the fish. If it is a fly, the angler allows only the leader to fall to the surface near the fish. The lure or fly is then brought back in hopes the fish will strike.

From the fish's viewpoint, it sees the fly swimming toward it and expects all prey to attempt to escape as it gets near and realizes danger. Instead, this "thing" continues to come straight at the predator–in what has to be regarded by the fish as an attack mode. Of course, the fish bolts or refuses to strike.

What should you do in such a situation? Instead of the lure or fly landing directly in front of the fish, cast it so that it falls to the water several feet to one side and a slight distance ahead of the fish. Then begin your retrieve. What the fish sees is a creature that appears to be sneaking off to the side, and the fish will grab it.

Take another situation, which is nearly opposite of the first one. The angler sees a fish directly in front, and the usual method is to make a cast that lets the lure or fly fall directly in front of the fish. The fly is then retrieved and the fish often doesn't take.

How should this presentation and retrieve have been made? Instead of casting so that the lure or fly lands directly in front of the fish, have it fall about even with, but slightly off to one side. Then retrieve it.

What happens if the lure or fly lands almost on a fish's nose? The impact of the lure or fly may alarm the fish. As it is retrieved, the fish sees something directly in front of it that appears to move away slowly or casually. This is not a natural occurrence, so the fish refuses the offering. But when the lure or fly falls off to the side, the fish sees something swimming away that appears to be trying to get out of sight before being seen by the fish. Impulse causes the fish to streak forward and hit the offering.

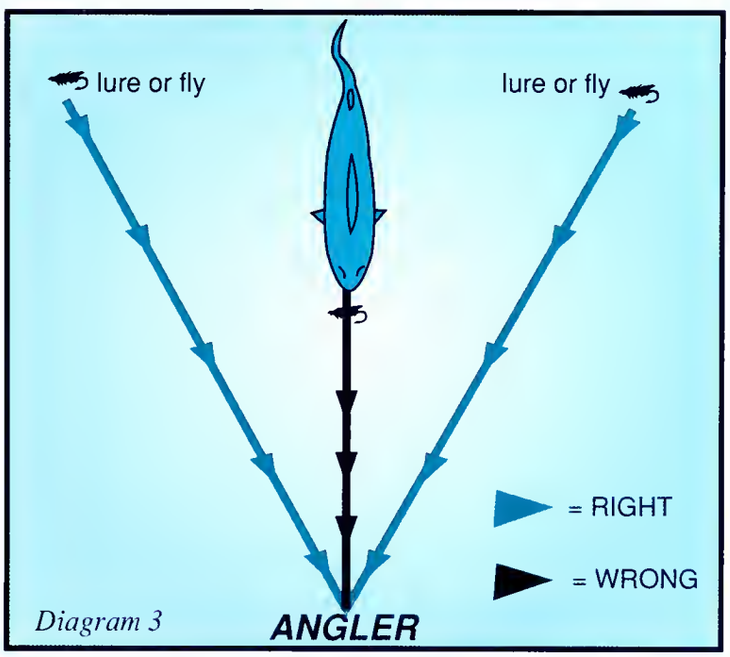
When a fish is lying in a stream or river, where the current carries its food along, it is unnatural for the fish to see creatures swimming upcurrent. To a fish, this simply doesn't appear to be a normal pattern. Instead, the cast should be made so that the lure or fly comes sweeping down to one side of the fish, and just before it gets to the fish, the lure or fly makes a "U" turn right in front of the predator.

This is what occurs frequently in the natural world. Hellgrammites, crayfish and other food morsels drift with the current. Downstream of them they suddenly realize that there is something that might eat them, so they try to go sideways rather than continue to drift toward a predator. A lure or fly that sweeps down with the current and then makes a turn away directly in front of the fish is the most natural of all retrieves.

Perhaps where fishermen make the most consistently wrong retrieve is when they see a fish that is cruising off to the left or right. What generally happens is that the angler cast the lure or fly so that it lands well ahead of and beyond the swimming fish. A retrieve is started, but all the time that the offering is brought back, the fish is swimming forward. Too many times the fish moves far enough ahead so that the lure or fly does not pass in front of the fish, as you would like in the perfect retrieve. Instead, the fly approaches the fish from an angle and from slightly to the rear.

Aside from spooking the fish on the cast, I find this to be one of the major reasons why anglers fail to score. This was the mistake that was constantly made by my companion at Christmas Island. His fly each time approached the bonefish at an angle from the rear.

If fishermen always try to retrieve their lures or flies so that the offerings appear to be acting naturally, as any prey species would try to elude a predator, the hook-up rates will increase dramatically.



If the fish is facing you, don't drop your offering right in front of the fish and retrieve, keeping it close to the fish's mouth. This is an unnatural retrieve and may frighten the fish. Instead, cast slightly beyond and to one side of the fish. Then retrieve to give the fish the impression that the offering is slipping by, hopefully not to be noticed by the fish. This is a natural reaction of a baitfish.

28 TIPS FOR OPENING DAY

BY BOB PETRI

Opening Day. For many dedicated Pennsylvania trout fishermen, these words are wrapped in ribbons of memories that stretch back in time to our favorite waters during April snowstorms, warm, sunny spring days, and all kinds of weather that's in between. Small streams, large streams and the stillwater experience of our trout lakes all have their special attractions as well as their loyal following among anglers. We're all making ready to celebrate this annual rite of spring. Beyond the memories, and beyond the need to satisfy tradition by being on the water, are the nuts and bolts mechanics of how to ensure that the ceremony and good fellowship of another opening day are complemented by a successful day of fishing. Given the crowds and commotion that come with opening day, this is not always easy.

Here are 28 proven tips to help you catch more trout on opening day on Commonwealth waters from Lake Erie to the Delaware.

1 Be ready to fish. What kind of shape is your tackle in after a winter in storage? Has your reel been newly lubricated, and how old is that monofilament on there, anyway? Did you patch that pesky little pin hole in your boots? Simple things, all. But a little preventive maintenance can mean more time fishing and less time fixing once you are streamside. Make sure your gear is as ready to go as you are.

2 Know your trout and how they react to opening day crowds. Browns are the most put off by stream bank angler traffic and often go into a day-long sulk under a log. Brookies are much more forgiving of all the commotion, often going about their business as if there were no one around. The reaction of rainbow trout is somewhere in between. You may want to spend the opening morning on a brook trout stream, and then move to one stocked with browns or rainbows for the less crowded afternoon.

3 If you have a limited amount of time to fish on opening day and must choose between the morning and afternoon, pick the latter. The feeding activity of trout is closely tied to water temperature, and on a typical April day the trout are most interested in feeding after the sun has had a few hours to take the chill out of the water. Change the storm windows or take the kids to the library in the morning. Save the afternoon for fishing.

4 Fish the other side of the creek. Take a close look at any popular trout stream. Notice where the well-worn paths and heavily traveled areas are along the banks. This is the direction from which 98 percent of the anglers approach the stream. Be one of the two percent. Approach these same pools and holding water from the other side of the stream. By doing so, you present your bait or lure from a completely different angle than what the fish are used to. This novel approach can increase your success.

5 Change flies or lures often if the trout are not cooperating. Newly stocked trout are often not yet completely acclimated to their new home in the stream when opening day comes around, and will often be exploring to find out what's what. You can play up to their natural curiosity by offering them something different on a regular basis.

6 Study the preseason stocking schedule carefully before choosing your opening day destination. If you are somewhat phobic about crowds, you may want to choose a stream that has received fewer fish because of stream size, limited access, or other factors. Fewer fish usually means fewer anglers, and the trout that are there may be less disturbed and hence more willing to feed.

The same idea applies in season. Check out this issue's back cover for a subscription offer that includes a free copy of the 1994 inseason trout stocking schedule.

7 If live bait is your chosen opening day method, put the worms or minnows away for a while and try a small crayfish or a caddis larva. These less commonly used baits can be just the ticket for those who have become jaded from seeing the usual opening day avalanche of worms, salmon eggs and minnows.

8 Try a 1/32-ounce crappie jig in white or in yellow if the water is discolored. Tip the hook with a mealworm or grub. Bounced slowly along the bottom, the combination of lure action and live bait odor can be deadly.

9 If you catch a fish quickly from a particular spot, camp on it--at least for a little while. Opening day trout often occupy the same pool or log jam in large numbers, continuing the routine that they learned so well during their recent hatchery days. Later in the season, they opt for a place of their own. But for the season opener you can usually find them stacked up. Once you find them, stay with them.

10 If opening day water levels are reasonable, a larger stream may offer the best opening day fishing. Large valley streams are likely to be a few degrees warmer than their smaller tributaries. This small difference in water temperature can mean a significant difference in fish activity, and it can increase your chances of success.

11 Using an old fiberglass fly rod can give the bait angler an opening day edge. You can use it to "poke and drop" your worm or minnow into brushy pockets that fishermen armed with spinning gear can't reach. The fly rod's sensitive tip telegraphs the most delicate strikes, causing you to miss fewer fish.

12 Take a hike. On opening day the pools near bridges and other points of easy roadside access are crawling with anglers. Put some distance between you and this carnival atmosphere by hiking up or downstream. Fewer stocked fish may



have filtered into these areas, but those that are present will be less nervous and more likely to be actively on the feed. You will also be experiencing some rare opening day elbow room, enhancing the day's experience.

13 Bait anglers and spinfishermen far outnumber fly anglers on most opening day streams. This can be an advantage for the fly fisher who remembers to fish deeply and slowly with wets and streamers. The hair and feather construction of a fly has a unique appearance that no bait or hardware can duplicate. It may just be the "something different" that the trout in your opening day stream are looking for.

14 Be thorough and cover the water. Too many opening day anglers spend the day jumping from pool to pool as if the season were going to end that very same day at sunset. Stay an additional few minutes in each pool, and make a few extra casts to likely looking spots. Early season trout can be sluggish in the cold waters of spring. They often respond to the angler who is persistent.

15 Imaginative and sometimes downright bizarre fly patterns can save the day for the opening day fly fisherman. To be sure, you are well-advised to carry the usual assortment of standard nymphs and streamers like the Hare's Ear, Coachman, Black-Nose Dace, and others. But make room as well for some patterns that look like they were designed by committee, and resemble nothing on this earth. Sometimes streamers and wets in loud shades of pink and green shock the newly stocked trout into hitting.

16 If a little solitude means more to you than taking home a limit of trout, give one of the Commonwealth's many delayed-harvest areas a try on opening day. Most of these areas are packed with trout, and opening day pressure is usually light. Remember that no fish may be harvested from these areas. Some delayed-harvest projects are open to spinning tackle as well as fly tackle. So you don't have to be an accomplished fly angler to take advantage of the fine fishing to be found in these specially regulated stream sections.

Consult the 1994 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws*. Delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only areas are listed on page 17. Delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only projects are listed on page 22.

17 Opening day usually means higher than normal stream flows. If you fish bait or flies, use enough weight to get your offering down where the trout are. If you fish spinners, try one that is a size or two larger that what you would normally use. If you fish with a size 0, try a size 1. The added weight helps you get the spinner down deeper in the faster stream sections, and you will catch more trout.

18 If on opening day your favorite stream flows high and muddy, don't despair or quit and go home. With few exceptions, even the muddiest streams have areas where there is clearer water. Pay particular attention to the mouths of small tributaries and to slack-water areas that are off the main flow. During freshets, trout gravitate to these areas to escape the gill-fouling sediment load in the stream.

19 If springtime rains have the streams out of control on opening day, try one of Pennsylvania's numerous stocked trout lakes. Incoming streams usually drop their silt load soon after entering the lake, allowing you to fish in relatively clear water.

20 Keeping in mind each trout species' particular water preference can add to your opening day success. Brown trout are the most cover-oriented and favor log jams and undercut banks. Rainbows have the greatest affinity for fast or broken water. Look for them in boulder-studded runs and in the deeper fast-water pockets. Brookies seem the most at home in deep pools. Take time to research which kinds of trout are stocked in your favorite opening day streams and concentrate your efforts on their favorite kinds of water.

21 On smaller streams, beaver dams are often opening day hotspots. The dams slow the water, allowing it to warm slightly, making the fish more active. Beaver dams also provide some of the deepest water on these smaller waterways, and trout congregate there to take advantage of the cover these greater depths afford.

22 Brightly colored flies can often jolt opening day trout into striking, but small, dark flies are often more effective when the water is low and clear. In these conditions, try wet flies like the Black Gnat, Dark Hendrickson and Alder in sizes 10 through 16. In addition to these wet flies, add an Adams, a Leadwing Coachman and a Royal Coachman.

23 Dry flies for opening day might include a Quill Gordon, Black Stone Fly, Adams, Red Quill, Light and Dark Hendrickson, and Royal Coachman in sizes 12 to 16.

24 If you plan to wade a large stream or river early in the season, donning a Type III personal flotation device (PFD) is wise. These kinds of PFDs sometimes have vest pockets for fishing tackle, so they provide double duty as a flotation device and as a vest.

25 Wading large, swift streams also requires the use of a wading staff. You can purchase staffs from mail order catalogs, or you can make them yourself from a broomstick.

26 You can catch more trout than anyone on the stream on opening day if you follow a few rules that are practical advice all season long. First, let stealth and streamside cover mask your approach to the stream. Hide behind a tree or crouch low in the grass when you cast. Secondly, dress in subdued colors. Too many anglers detract from their opening day success by wearing bright-orange hats and vests. This kind of apparel is meant to be seen, and believe me, trout do see it. And when they do, they usually leave the scene in a hurry.

27 Attaching your bait to the hook in a natural manner can make a world of difference in the level of your success. Hook live minnows through the back or lips so they can swim freely. Run the hook point through nightcrawlers only once or twice, allowing the ends to hang free and wriggle enticingly in the current.

28 You can follow every rule of good presentation and wise lure selection and still have a mediocre day if your hook points aren't sharp. Most hooks that come from the factory are simply not sharp enough to provide good, consistent penetration into the trout's jaw. This is particularly true of the treble hooks on mass-produced spinners, and the small packages of bait hooks sold in many department and sporting goods stores. Before you make your first cast, use a file or one of the excellent hook sharpening tools currently on the market to hone the point of your hook to razor sharpness.

I hope that somewhere in these tips is a tidbit of information that helps make you a better opening day angler. We fishermen are indeed fortunate to be able once again to take part in this celebration with friends and family. It is a tradition that has deep roots in the angling heritage of our beautiful state. I wish you all the finest fellowship and the best opening day luck!

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 1992-93 (July 1992 Through June 1993)



photo- Barry and Cathy Beck

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.



photo- Art Michaels

Accomplishments

• Agreement among all parties on the necessary steps and schedule to build state-of-the-art fish-passage facilities at the Susquehanna River's Holtwood, Safe Harbor and York Haven dams by the year 2000.

• Paddlefish raised at the Commission's Linesville Fish Culture Station stocked in the Allegheny and Ohio rivers as part of a 10-year paddlefish restoration plan.

• Purchased a 130-acre tract of Spring Creek, Centre County, opening nearly two stream miles to public fishing, placing a total of eight miles of this stream's Class A trout water under Commission management and control.

• Acquired Ingham Springs and Lake, Bucks County, the largest limestone spring in eastern Pennsylvania and a 15-acre lake.

• Began a Conservation Acquisition Program (CAP) to assist the Commission in acquiring access to Commonwealth waters through private contributions.

• Managed some 312,000 boat registrations, issued 6,700 boating safety certificates, trained 1,200 water rescue personnel, deployed 1,800 aids to navigation.

• 11th class of waterways conservation officers graduated and officers assigned to field districts.

• Stocked 798 streams (4,913 miles) and 118 lakes (22,161 acres) with a total of 11.9 million fingerling and adult trout and salmon.

• Stocked 148 areas on rivers and streams (1,286 miles) and 87,801 acres of ponds and lakes with some 103.4 million fry, fingerling and adult warmwater/coolwater fish.

• Stocked a grand total of 115.3 million fish, all species.

• Conducted 50 teacher workshops in which 645 teachers were trained in teaching water resource and science education techniques.

• Trained 127 fishing skills instructors, and held 76 SMART angler classes.

• Some 1,200 children and young adults participated in the Keystone Aquatic Resource Education (KARE) urban fishing programs in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

• Opened an additional 18 miles of streams to public fishing.

Fishing Licenses, Trout/Salmon Permits and Boat Registrations Support:

• Fishing and boating in Commonwealth and boundary waters.

• Fish stocking and restoration of natural fisheries in waterways open to the public.

• Waterways protection and law enforcement by 80 waterways conservation officers and some 400 deputy waterways conservation officers.

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 1992-93 (July 1992 Through June 1993)



photo- Russ Gettig

- A staff of more than 400 full-time employees.
- Development, management and maintenance of some 250 properties, including administrative facilities, 14 fish culture stations, fishing and boating lakes, and boating and fishing access sites on public waters.
- Some of the nation's most advanced fish culture and research, conducted by biologists, scientists, fish culturists and managers.
- Conservation and education programs for children and adults.
- Land and waterway acquisition for public use.
- Habitat improvement and protection for diverse populations of fish and other cold-blooded animals.

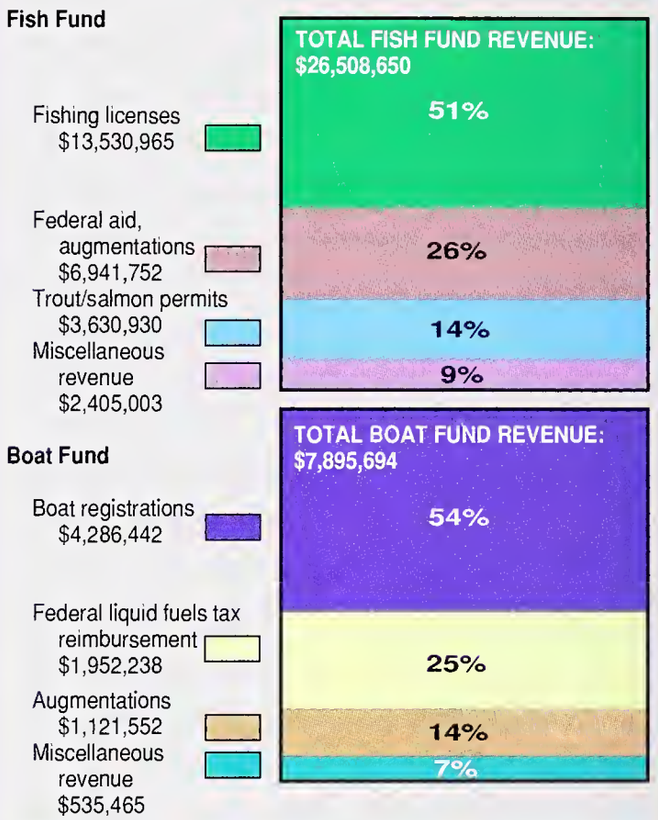
Plans for the Future

During this fiscal year all Commission employees have participated in the agency's long-range planning and team-building efforts. Here are the long-range objectives toward which the agency is striving:

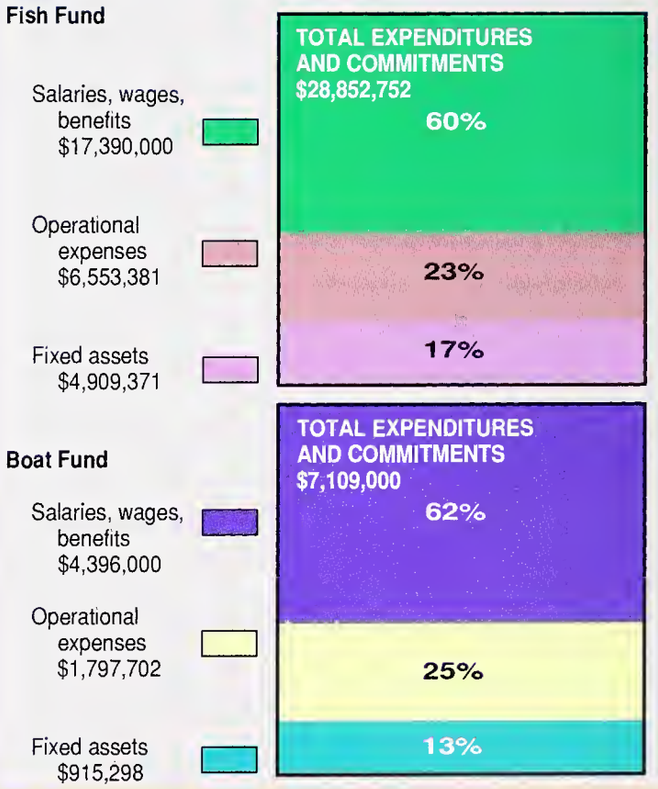
- Increase public involvement in setting the agency's direction for the next decade.
- Continue to emphasize the protection and expansion of Pennsylvania's fishery resources through cooperative efforts to reclaim 700 miles of degraded waters.
- Increase the variety and number of statewide fishing opportunities to support a 30 percent increase in fishing days by the year 2004.
- Provide for boating opportunities to support six million more boating days by the year 2004.
- Increase the fishing opportunities in large rivers by 50 percent, and the fishing and boating use on Lake Erie by 30 percent during the next decade.
- Increase by 100 percent the use of medium-sized warmwater streams and small rivers for fishing and boating.
- Lengthen fishing seasons by increasing catch-and-release opportunities throughout the year.
- Establish a Susquehanna River shad migration of one million fish by 2004.
- Expand Lake Erie steelhead fishing.
- Develop and promote a more comprehensive habitat improvement and public involvement program.
- Expand educational efforts in the areas of basic fishing skills, boating safety and environmental awareness.

Where the Money Comes From

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission receives no general state tax funds. Unlike many government programs, there is a direct connection between what the resource users pay and the benefits they receive. The agency is funded by the purchase of fishing licenses, trout/salmon stamps, other licenses and fees, boat registrations, boating permits and federal excise taxes on fishing and boating equipment.



Where the Money Goes



photos-Barry & Cathy Beck; graphics- Ted Walke

Last Chance for a 1991 Trout/Salmon Stamp

The remainder of the 1991 trout/salmon stamps, the Commonwealth's first of state, will be destroyed on February 28, 1994. Of course, the 1991 stamps are no longer valid, but if you'd like to purchase one as a collector's item, the stamps cost $5.50 each and can be purchased by mail. Send a check or money order (payable to the PA Fish & Boat Commission) to: Mary C. Stine, Chief, Licensing Section, PA Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. For more information, contact Licensing Section Chief Mary C. Stine at the above address, or call (717) 657-4534. The deadline for the Commission's receiving orders is February 25, 1994.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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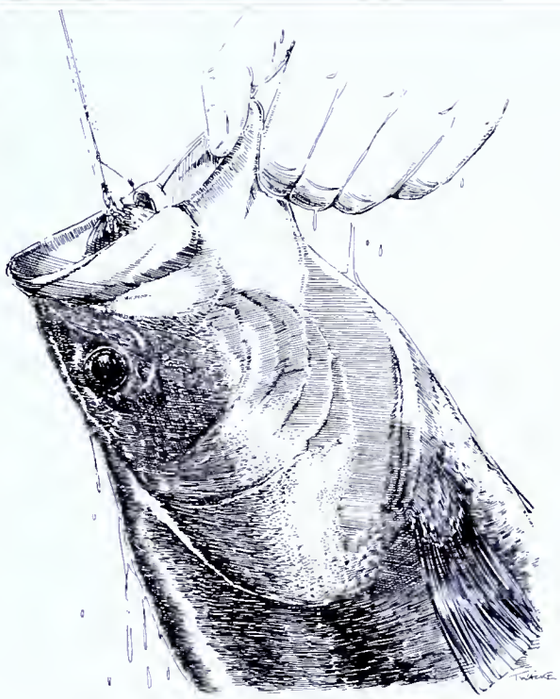
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Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Mossbeds provide excellent structure for trophy largemouth bass, but they can be difficult to fish. Try using spinnerbaits. They can be ripped across the tops of mossbeds, dropped into pockets, or even worked very fast right through the middle of weedy areas.

Do you regularly poke your finger, or snag your thread, on the point of the hook when tying a fly? Seat the hook in the vise so that the point is buried in the jaws of the vise. After tying the fly, remember to sharpen the hook because this method might dull the point.

Be careful when using insect repellents with high concentrations of DEET. This chemical can ruin fly lines, and it reacts poorly with monofilament line.

illustration- Ted Walke

Most smallmouth bass experts agree that cold water and bad weather can make for some very good fishing. Trophy smallmouth bass are especially active during the winter and early spring months, probably because they are stocking up for the spawning season. Look for them to move onto shallow shoals and points.

Polarized sunglasses are available with a variety of lens colors. Use amber-colored lenses for cloudy days and gray lenses for sunny days. These combinations provide high contrast, allowing you to see into the water with greater clarity.

When fishing shallow areas of lakes in the winter, try a short-billed crankbait that runs one to 5 feet deep. This kind of lure lets you search the water quickly for fish. Productive colors for winter bass fishing are black/gray and black/chrome.

Flies tied with herl bodies are easily torn and frayed. Counter-wrap wire ribbing through these bodies to strengthen the herl, giving them a longer life. The ribbing, especially copper or gold, also adds flash to your flies.

Crayfish are a favorite food of smallmouth bass. An easy fly to tie that imitates crawdads uses only four materials. Use a clump of red squirrel tail for the tail of the fly, but separate it into the "pinchers" of the crayfish by dividing the squirrel hair evenly with your tying thread. Tie in a narrow piece of turkey tail feather, a little longer than the hook shank, a brown or orange hackle feather, and then wrap a body of brown, orange or tan wool. Wrap the hackle forward and tie it off. Then pull the turkey feather over the top and tie it off.

Cast and Caught



Tom Walton, of Pittsburgh, hooked this brown trout while fishing in Wolf Creek, Butler County. The fish, caught on a nightcrawler, was 20 inches long.



Three Springs resident Thor Wingert, age 12, proudly displays the yellow perch he hooked while fishing in Raystown Lake. The fish, caught on a nightcrawler, weighed 1 pound, 4 ounces and measured 14 1/4 inches. Nice fish, Thor!



Blaine Hertzog, of Bethlehem, used a minnow to catch this 25 1/4-inch brown trout. The 7-pound, 11-ounce fish was taken out of Beltzville Dam in Carbon County.



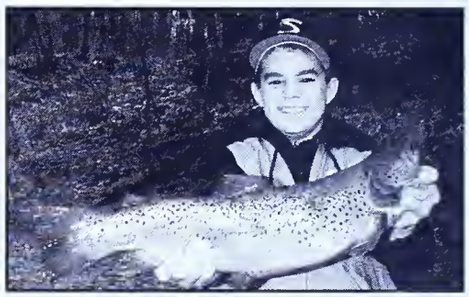
Vincent Leppert, of Patton, earned a Husky Musky Club award when he caught this Allegheny River muskellunge. The fish weighed 30 pounds and measured 50 1/4 inches in length.



Allentown resident Paul D. Wint III earned a Senior Angler Award for this Susquehanna River smallmouth bass. The fish, caught on a jig/shiner combo, weighed 5 pounds, 4 ounces and was 21 1/2 inches long.



Tidionte resident Brandon Cotterman earned a Junior Angler Award for this smallmouth bass. The fish, caught on a minnow, weighed 3 pounds, 14 ounces and was 21 inches long.



Joe Dobies, of Natrona, earned a Junior Angler Award for this brown trout he caught last November. The Elk Creek fish weighed 5 pounds, 12 ounces and was 24 inches long. Nice job, Joe!



Daren Keen, of Wilkes-Barre, caught this nice brown trout while fishing the Lehigh River in Lackawanna County. The fish tipped the scales at 9 pounds and measured 27 inches in length. Nice fish, Daren!

Cast and Caught



Michelle Grosko, of Middletown, shows off the rainbow trout she caught while fishing in Middletown Reservoir. The fish, caught on the opening day of trout season, weighed 5 1/2 pounds and was 24 inches long.



Ed Dybalski, Jr., of Reading, caught and released this northern pike last fall while fishing on Lake Ontelaunee. The fish measured 35 1/2 inches in length. Great job, Ed!



New Castle resident Karl Menges caught this brown trout while jigging on Walnut Creek last November. The fish was 24 1/2 inches long and weighed 5 pounds, 12 ounces.



McMurray resident Jeff Thomas hooked this muskellunge while fishing on Conneaut Lake. The fish was 52 inches long and weighed 35 pounds, 2 ounces.



Scott Conrad, of Donora, caught this steelhead out of Walnut Creek, Erie County. The fish was 24 inches long and weighed 8 pounds, 6 ounces.



Wayne Angstadt, of Allentown, shows off the nice brown trout he caught while fishing at Beltzville Dam. The fish weighed 9 pounds, 9 ounces and was 28 inches long.



Erie resident James Clinger fooled this steelhead trout while fishing in Trout Run last September. The fish weighed 8 pounds, 8 ounces and was 30 inches long.

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Old Rods

The old bamboo fly rods cannot be as good as graphite, they say, but then they say bamboo has a special feel and the older anglers will nod knowingly, even though they are carrying something shiny-black and made of carbon. The student caster will admire the shape and color of split bamboo, but he then explains that the new rod is easier to handle, and if he learns the cost of fine cane he will classify it as an antique to be admired and not used.

I do not know who built my first good rod, or if it feels good to other anglers. It's heavy and the action is a little soft--that's "wet-fly action," even though I threw bass bugs with it. When I had the finish renewed it cost more than the rod had originally, and the craftsman who made it look like new said that he wondered who built it. He said it was a really good glue job but he wasn't satisfied with the way the nodes were distributed.

"Nodes" was a new word to me.

When I first got that rod and had learned to lob little spinners with it, I was happy until I went fishing with an older man who had an expensive rod with many more silk wrappings of tasteful colors. I asked the dealer why I couldn't have all that pretty silk on mine and he said my rod was a newer model and had such good glue that it didn't need extra wrappings. All that thread actually cramped the rod's action, he said, and I was happy again. All I lacked was a famous maker's name on my rod, but the dealer neatly inscribed my own name just above the handle and I was satisfied with it for years. It was a little heavy for trout and a little light for bass, but it worked fine with the silk line I dried after every use, the gut leaders I soaked in a little aluminum container with felt pads and the Bristol reel I used on the rod that cost about four dollars.

When glass came along, I tried it and some of the first glass rods split. By then my bamboo had taken a little set in spite of all my care, but it remained my best rod and suddenly I found myself taking special care of it, somehow feeling it was an important part of my life and should be treated as such. I got an aluminum case for it when I had it refinished, and when anyone else showed special interest in it, I tried to get it out of harm's way. I was happy with the new lines and nylon leaders but along about then I encountered the double haul and other modern moves and had to have something with more backbone.

From thousands of attics and storerooms have come well-used bamboos, their original owners long gone, and heirs have hoped that some with famous names and others with no names at all might be prized by collectors.

There are other old rods not for sale, treasured for their intimate contact with those who used them. They have been very personal possessions, and like their owners, no two bamboo rods are exactly alike.

As graphite took its place in every phase of fly fishing, there were still a few who preferred bamboo when they wanted delicacy. There have been the old names and cane rods so famous that they became collectors' treasures, many of them never to be used. From thousands of attics and storerooms have come well-used bamboos, their original owners long gone, and heirs have hoped that some with famous names and others with no names at all might be prized by collectors--but there are other old rods not for sale, treasured for their intimate contact with those who used them. They have been very personal possessions, and like their owners, no two bamboo rods are exactly alike.

Like other fanatics, I have sought magic wands that would fill in for lagging reflexes and clumsy habits. I have more rods than shirts. When bamboo first began to fade I was at a dealer's casting pool admiring the latest mass-produced products and comparing them with costly cane rods that were playing second fiddle, especially in distance casting. I stood beside a factory man, and as we threw line we spoke glowingly of the great new materials and especially of one new model that seemed to fire the line almost by itself. A quiet youngster stood by and watched intently with big eyes for the rack of rods that stood by the pool. He asked the price of the wonder wand we gushed over.

He'd been saving money, he said, and he wanted a really good fly rod. The price didn't seem to surprise him and he examined it carefully. He held it respectfully and waved the tip gently. Then he went to the rod rack to put a gentle hand on a gleaming bamboo.

"This is a lot more expensive," he said, "but I can save a little longer for it. Somebody *built* this one!"

SMART Angler's Notebook

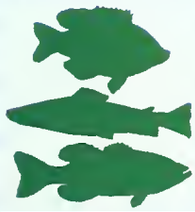
by Carl Richardson

The Right Tool for the Right Job, Part 2: Which rod is right for me?

On this page is a look at the fishing notebook of an angler who knows that there is more to fishing than just tying on a hook. The SMART Angler's Notebook is full of ideas and ways to get the most out of fishing. Whether you are new to fishing or you are a seasoned pro, there is something for you in the pages of this notebook.

A fishing rod does more than just hold the reel. The rod helps you cast bait or lures and tells you when a fish has taken your offering. Because there are many different kinds of fish and ways to catch them, there are many different kinds of rods. These rods differ in their style (spinning or casting, for example), length, action and materials.

Rod Action



ULTRALIGHT: LIGHT LINES, 2-POUND TO 6-POUND TEST. LIGHT LURES, 1/32-OUNCE TO 1/8-OUNCE. USED WITH SMALL LURES AND BAIT FOR PANFISH, TROUT OR FINICKY BASS.



LIGHT: LINES 4-POUND TO 8-POUND TEST. LURES 1/8-OUNCE TO 1/4-OUNCE. USED WITH LURES AND LIVE BAIT FOR BASS, TROUT IN LARGE STREAMS OR LAKES, CATFISH.



MEDIUM: 8-POUND TO 12-POUND TEST. LURES 1/4-OUNCE TO 3/8-OUNCE. USED FOR BASS, CATFISH, WALLEYES.



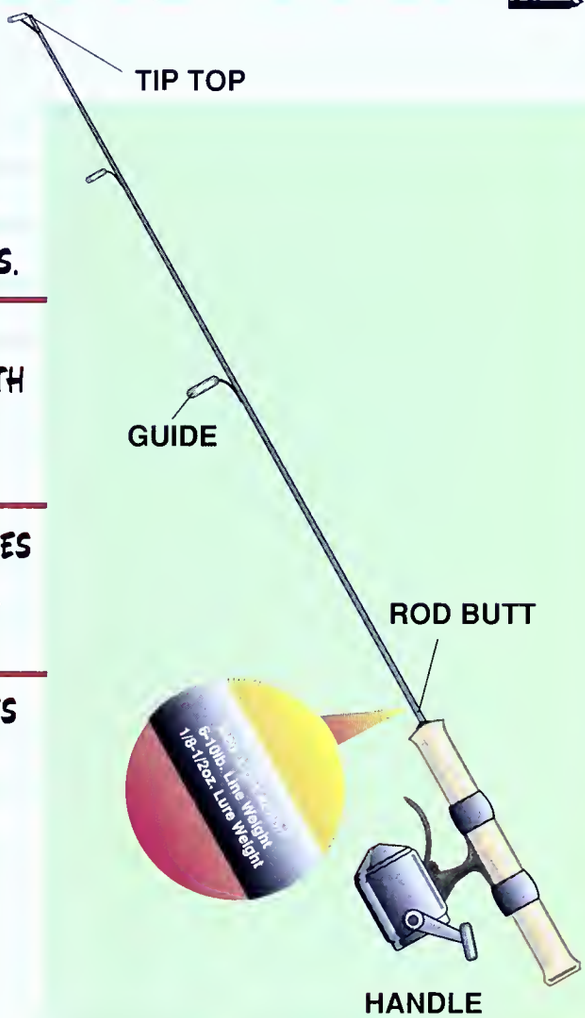
HEAVY: LINE 10-POUND TEST AND UP. LURES 1/2-OUNCE AND BIGGER. USED FOR LARGE GAMEFISH OR FISH IN HEAVY COVER.

Length

SHORT RODS (4 TO 5 FEET) ARE ACCURATE AT SHORT DISTANCES. USE WHEN ACCURACY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DISTANCE.

LONG RODS (6 FEET AND LONGER) ARE BEST WHEN DISTANCE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ACCURACY. FISHING FROM SHORE, FOR EXAMPLE, OR TRYING TO COVER A LOT OF WATER.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE ANY FISHING OUTFIT IS YOU! THE BEST EQUIPMENT THAT MONEY CAN BUY DOESN'T GUARENTEE SUCCESS.



Construction

FIBERGLASS- INEXPENSIVE, CAN TAKE A LOT OF ABUSE, HEAVY.

GRAPHITE- LIGHTWEIGHT, STIFF, MORE EXPENSIVE, BUT CAN'T TAKE A LOT OF ABUSE.

COMPOSITE- MADE OF BOTH MATERIALS, BEST OF BOTH.

EVERYBODY'S WEARING IT!





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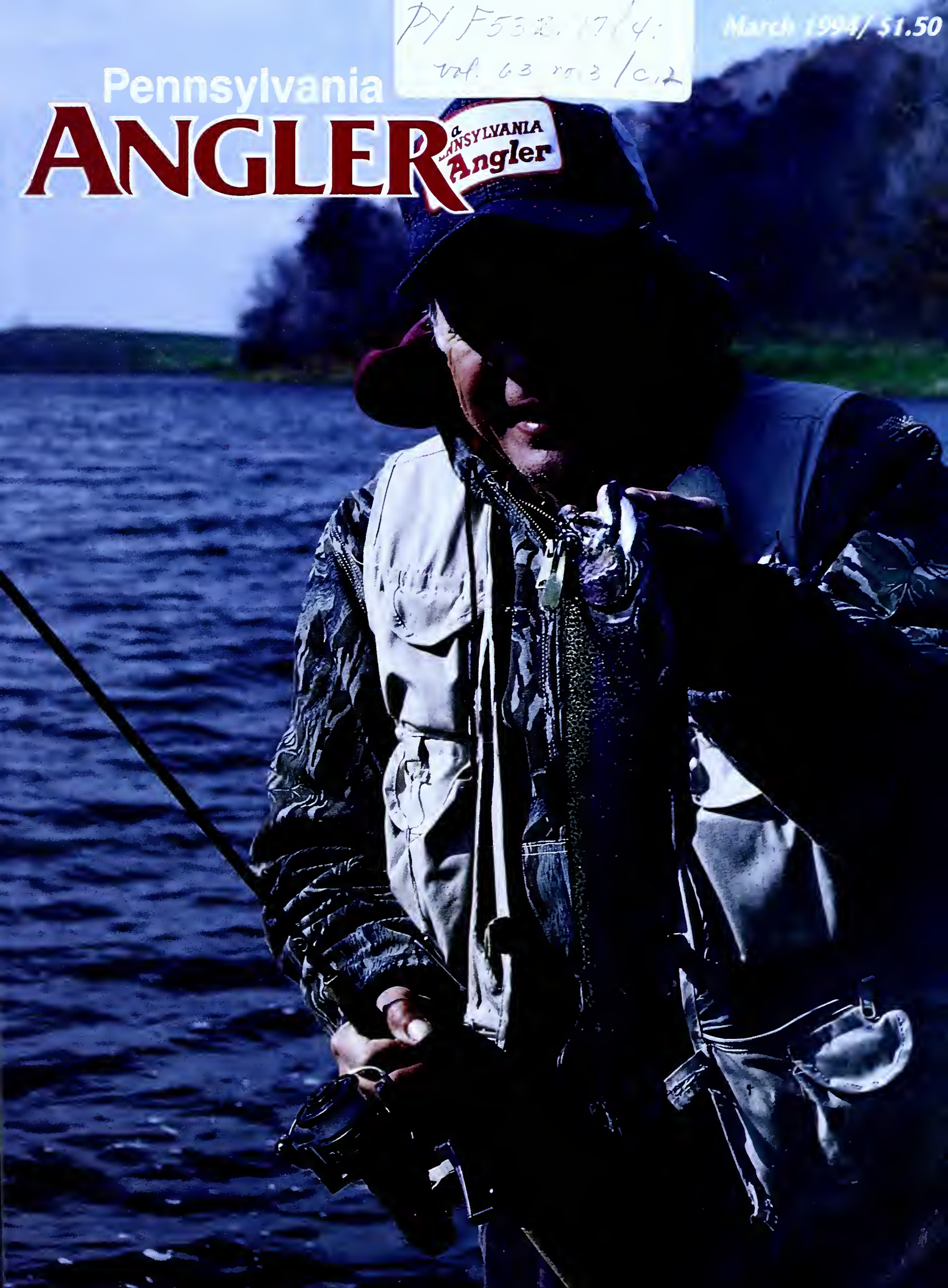
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Straight Talk

Reflections



Edward R. Miller, P.E.
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

By the time most of you read this column, I will have completed my tenure as Executive Director of this great agency. During my nearly 35 years of service to Pennsylvania's anglers and boaters, it has been my pleasure to work with 38 different Commissioners, four different Executive Directors, hundreds of co-workers and many thousands of anglers and boaters who shared a conservation ethic and a common goal to make Pennsylvania's fishing and boating programs the very best.

Occasionally I encountered shortsighted individuals whose personal agenda was totally out of step with the public's best interests. Fortunately, those "small thinkers" are in the minority, and level heads usually prevail. Level-headed thinking is essential if Pennsylvania's fishing and boating resources are to prevail.

As I leave the public service arena, I am compelled to reflect on some of the more important advances made by this agency during my years of service. The results of these actions provided millions of hours of public recreation, and will provide billions of hours of fishing and boating recreation for centuries to come.

Some of the more significant achievements include:

• Guiding the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration project to a state of near completion through a variety of agency efforts. Also guided installation of permanent fishways on five major Pennsylvania dams.

• Gaining national recognition of fishing programs as the "Best in the Nation."

• Purchasing of seven of the largest springs in the Commonwealth, including the two largest (Boiling Springs and Big Spring).

• Directing production of more than 130 million adult trout, nearly 2 billion gamefish fry and fingerlings, and millions of Pacific salmon for Pennsylvania anglers.

• Acquisition of valuable streams, including Big Spring Creek and sections of Spring Creek, Cedar Spring Creek, Penns Creek, Yellow Breeches Creek, Delaware River, Susquehanna River and many others.

• Creation of 34 fishing and boating lakes.

• Establishment of a fisheries management organization, conducted a statewide coldwater stream survey and inventory, and implemented innovative, scientific and user-based fishing regulations designed to increase angler opportunities.

• Development of nearly 300 fishing and boating access areas on lakes, rivers and streams.

• Strengthening the agency's resource protection and enhancement capabilities by expansion of law enforcement staff, creation of Adopt-a-Stream and Environmental Services programs, updating of fines and penalties, protection of naturally reproducing fish populations, upgrading stream quality standards, and acquisition of valuable aquatic resources.

• Development of three new fish culture stations and reconstruction of current propagation facilities into one of the best and the most versatile hatchery systems in the country.

• Changing the name of the agency to "Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission" to describe fully the agency's responsibilities.

• Creation of the Aquatic Resources Education program and expansion of the Safe Boating Education system to attain national recognition as the best state programs in the nation.

• Development of improved office and training facilities for Commission staff statewide, and obtained necessary lands, conceived project plans, and obtained approvals to move ahead with development of a central headquarters facility.

• Defense of the agency's independent status by filing a lawsuit to deal with Administration assertions of policy supervision and control. Won preliminary injunctions on four issues of concern.

• Implementation of agency-wide strategic planning effort.

• Strengthening of staff selection, training, performance and recognition efforts in all program areas.

To the many people who helped establish this heritage, I say thank you, and Godspeed. It has been my pleasure to work with you for such worthwhile purposes. You have earned my heartfelt respect and appreciation, and I ask that you continue to support this agency and its mission.

Farewell, good friends.

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Pennsylvania ANGLER

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Rainbow trout cover photo by Jeff Knapp

Opportunity

Isn't it thrilling to hook and land a *really* BIG fish? There are fish and there's fishing, and then there's catching a *really* BIG one. It's so special, we remember the event a long time. We tell our friends and relatives and business associates. We tell our children, and our grandchildren. And we tell them--and anyone else who'll listen--over and over again.

This anticipation, this hope, is part of the sizzle that crackles louder and louder as opening day, warmer weather and a new season approach.

The spark begins with opportunity. The Commission's charge is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of our resources. Opportunity is also the focus of this issue--providing useful information on where to fish right now, and where to go on opening day and early in the season. When you do catch that really big fish, remember to photograph it quickly. It is wise to return most of your catch. Send us a sharply focused, clear photograph of you with your catch, and include the details of the catch. We'd love to consider it for publication in our "Cast & Caught" section.--*Art Michaels, Editor.*

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Southeast Corner Trout Waters

by Ed Howey

How well does reality reward the dreams of trout anglers among the 5 million or so citizens in Philadelphia and surrounding communities? Surprisingly well, as a matter of fact, especially for anglers willing to travel to waters a bit farther out.

The five-county region (Bucks, Philadelphia, Montgomery, Delaware and Chester) divides conveniently into three zones. Zone I includes Delaware, Philadelphia and a small chunk of Montgomery. All waters in this zone are within 20 miles of central Philadelphia, most within 15. Zone II includes Bucks, most of Montgomery and Chester north of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Zone III includes the rest of Chester south of the Turnpike.

All waters in this region flow through communities where residents put great value on beautiful surroundings. Many stretches require permission from property owners. Anglers must put their best foot forward. Trespassing, littering or barbaric parking practices inevitably lead to more posting and less water available to the public.

Zone I

Few large cities offer trout fishing opportunities in city parks. Philadelphia offers two. Pennypack Creek flows through Pennypack Valley Park in northeast Philadelphia. Some 8 miles of heavily stocked water is accessible from a footpath along the entire length in the park. Bridge crossings provide access from the Montgomery County line down to Frankford Avenue.

Just a few miles north of the heart of the city, Wissahickon Creek flows through Fairmount Park to the Schuylkill. Anglers can find a footpath along the 4-mile stretch through the park. An additional 3 miles of Wissahickon lie a short distance upstream, just north of the Turnpike in Fort Washington State Park.

City-bound anglers can escape to several small streams in Lower Merion, Radnor and Marple townships near the Delaware/Montgomery County line. Mill Creek is stocked in a 3-mile stretch near Bryn Mawr, as is 2.5 miles of Ithan Creek a bit farther west. Popular destinations in the same area include Darby Creek and Little Darby Creek, with more than 6 miles of stocked water. Try the main stem from the bridge on the West Chester Pike (PA 3) upstream to a point about 3/4-mile above the Sawmill Road bridge. Little Darby enters the main stem about 50 yards up from Sawmill Road and is stocked for more than a mile upstream.

Still farther west in Delaware County, Ridley Creek draws early season anglers. A regulated area (fly fishing only/delayed harvest) garners most of the ink, but there is something for everyone in this state park setting, where city anglers can beam down into 2,600 acres of woods, fields and wildlife a scant 16 miles from the center of Philadelphia. The 7-mile stocked section starts at the Colonial Plantation exhibit near the northern boundary of Ridley Creek State Park, and extends down to Brookhaven Road. Just east of US 202 go south off PA 3 on either Providence Road or Sandy Flash Drive to the park.

Farthest west in Zone I, Chester Creek and its West Branch offer early season trout angling. The main stem from Bridgewater Road upstream to the Cheyney State campus receives stocked trout. Above US 1 the stream winds through multi-acre residential properties. Below the highway it traverses a heavily urbanized area. Get access information from local sources before tackling this water. The West Branch is stocked for about 1 1/2 miles upstream from the firehouse at Aston Mills. To reach this stretch, take Valley Brook Road south off US 1 to Aston Mills.

Zone II

Early season anglers can share the dream with plenty of company at two Bucks County impoundments. Levittown Lake, a 20-acre mecca for family trouting owned by the Fish and Boat Commission, is located in residential Levittown a short drive on the Levittown Parkway off US 13. A few miles up PA 413 just north of Langhorne in Core Creek Park, Lake Luxembourg at 166 acres offers more elbow room. Both impoundments issue permits for boats with electric motors.

The Delaware Canal is heavily stocked along a 15-mile stretch from New Hope to Morrisville. The old tow path along the canal provides easy, uncluttered access from which youngsters and oldsters alike can get a feel for tossing lures, worms, eggs or cheese. PA 32 follows the canal.



Southeast of Doylestown, Neshaminy Creek is approved trout water from Dark Hollow Road upstream for about 3 miles. Both Almshouse Road and Swamp Road off PA 263 intersect Dark Hollow Road. Farther north, Tohickon Creek, tributary to the Delaware River near Point Pleasant, offers 5 miles of approved water from Dark Hollow Road (different one) downstream to the PA 32 bridge. The upper water in Ralph Stover State Park is easily accessible from local roads off PA 413 and PA 3. The lower portion lies in Tohickon County Park off Cafferty Road. Parking is available in the park and the 3/4-mile hike down the mountain (and back up) tends to thin the crowds on this stretch.

North of the Turnpike, in the Perkiomen Creek drainage, several approved trout streams await more venturesome dreamers. Closest of these, Skippack Creek receives 10 miles of heavy stocking from the bridge on PA 73 downstream through Evansburg State Park. Within the park, Fish and Boat Commission parking areas and roadside pull-offs ease the parking situation, and foot and horse trails facilitate access.

Farther north, a stretch of the East Branch Perkiomen Creek northeast of Collegeville between Salfordsville Road and Bergys Mill Road is open to public angling. Local roads off PA 63 and PA 113 lead to the stocked water.

North of Collegeville, PA 63 crosses Unami Creek near Sumneytown. Follow Swamp Creek Road off PA 63 to reach the lower stocked stretch. Farther upstream, east of US 9 in Bucks County, another stretch of Unami Creek south from PA 663 also receives stocked trout. Finally, Perkiomen Creek itself from East Greenville to the Berks County line provides good early season angling.

Other approved streams in Zone II lie in Chester County and are tributaries to the Schuylkill near Phoenixville. Valley Creek and its tributaries are open to public angling but are no longer stocked and are subject to no-kill regulations because of chemical pollution.

Pickering Creek wends its way from west to east through farmland, vineyards and small towns to flow into Pickering Reservoir just south of Phoenixville. Trout are stocked at various places along this 10-mile stretch. The best access to Pickering's trout water is by way of local roads off PA 113.

French Creek once held a place among the finest trout streams in the East. Limestone-influenced, coursing through cooling woodland canopies, the fast riffles, deep pools and long runs offered excellent trout habitat. And though "progress" has somewhat diminished these virtues, the stream still ranks as one of the best in the area. The longest stocked stream in the five-county region, French Creek receives plentiful preseason and inseason catchables from St. Peters west of PA 100 to the covered bridge near Kimberton some 15 miles downstream. One stretch not quite a mile long is restricted to delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only regulations.

PA 100 crosses French Creek at Pughtown. Upstream and downstream local roads either cross or parallel the stream. Anglers hooked on small-stream fishing should try Beaver Run above its junction with French near Pughtown.

Zone III

All Zone III waters lie in Chester County south of the Turnpike and west of PA 100. Northernmost, above US 30, are the headwaters branches of Brandywine Creek. Eight miles of the East Branch are stocked from US 30 near Downingtown up-

Southeast Corner Trout Waters

stream to the PA 282 bridge at Glenmoore. PA 282 provides ready access at many points along the way. Streamside hiking and biking trails appeal to anglers who enjoy a bit of walking to reach the hotspots.

From westbound US 30, exit at PA 282 near Downingtown and follow the signs to PA 282 North. If traveling east on US 30 go to the PA 113 exit, get back on westbound US 30 immediately, and back track 1/4-mile to the PA 282 exit.

Unfortunately, early season parking may be a problem and anglers sometimes resort to unsavory parking practices. If you can't find a parking place, it's better to take off for another stream. There are plenty not too far away.

A short 6 miles to the west, the West Branch Brandywine Creek meets US 30 north of Coatesville. The approved water lies north of US 30 for about 6 miles upstream to the vicinity of Icedale Lake. Heavy stocking takes place near Hibernia Park, where both the Fish and Boat Commission and a cooperative nursery deposit large numbers of fat and tasty catchables for anglers to pick from swirling pockets amid huge boulders.

To reach the stream, exit US 30 at PA 82. PA 82 north intersects several local roads that lead west to bridges. Another approach turns left off PA 82 onto PA 340 for about one mile to Wagontown Road. Follow Wagontown Road until it tracks the stream.

A narrow valley of woods and boulders, this area holds many meticulously restored properties of historical value, so tread carefully.

Also reached off US 30, West Valley Creek offers several miles of approved trout water. Not to be confused with Valley Creek, West Valley drains into the East Branch Brandywine south of Downingtown. A medium-sized stream, West Valley benefits from limestone springs that moderate both summer and winter temperature extremes. About 1.2 miles of this stream recently received delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only designation in recognition of its above-average water quality. Access the stocked water by way of local roads south of US 30. Whitford Road crosses the stream, and Clover Mill Road west off Whitford follows the stream for about a mile. Below the regulated area, local roads cross at several points.

South of US 30, Buck Run, tributary to the West Branch Brandywine below Coatesville, has stocked fish for small-stream anglers, as does Pocopson Creek, tributary to the main Brandywine about a mile or so above Chadds Ford. Stocked water in the vicinity of Lenape can be reached by local roads north off US 1 or off PA 52.

The remaining trout waters in Zone III lie along the Delaware and Maryland lines south of Kennet Square and Oxford. This region of Chester County is characterized by small villages, rolling farmland, multi-acre residential properties, and meandering back roads on which getting lost is not hard. It's best to stick to roads you can find on maps.

Farthest west, Big Elk Creek is reached by local roads off PA 841 and PA 896. White Clay Creek and its branches at White Clay Creek Preserve State Park offer several miles of stocked water, including the main stem from the Delaware border upstream to the East Branch junction, and the East Branch and the Middle Branch upstream from their junction. The first 1.7 miles of the Middle Branch is subject to delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only rules. The best access to these waters is from local roads off PA 896 and PA 841.

Special regulations

Those indomitable dreamers who chuck artificial flies and lures at early season trout head for sections of five streams in the five-county area that are subject to special regulations.

Delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only rules apply to 0.9 miles of French Creek and 0.6 miles of Ridley Creek. The French Creek stretch lies a few miles east of Pughtown. Go east off PA 100 onto Pughtown Road for about 3 1/2 miles to Hollow Road just past Sheeder Mill Farm. Turn right on Hollow Road to the covered bridge where a wire across the stream above the bridge marks the downstream limit of the regulated section. Access to the regulated water upstream is by way of local roads off Pughtown Road.

The short regulated section of Ridley Creek runs from the falls at Sycamore Mills in the state park downstream to the mouth of Dismal Run. Take Providence Road south off PA 3 to Bishop Hollow Road, then west to the parking area near Sycamore Mills.

Delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only rules apply to 1.2 miles of West Valley Creek and 1.7 miles of the Middle Branch White Clay Creek. The restricted stretch of West Valley Creek lies south of US 30 just west of Exton. Boot Road, a major artery out of Downingtown, crosses the stream at about the mid-point of the stretch. Above the bridge, Clover Mill Road tracks West Valley for about a half-mile. Below Boot Road, Valley Creek Road tracks the stream through a very dark tunnel to the downstream limit of the regulated area and beyond. Though not wide, West Valley Creek has deep runs where good-sized holdovers take up residence.

The restricted stretch of the Middle Branch White Clay runs for 1.7 miles upstream from the junction with the East Branch at the White Clay Creek State Preserve. Posters near the Good Hope Road bridge mark the upper limit.

Despite Valley Creek's DER rating as Exceptional Value Water, evidence of chemical contamination in the fish brought on no-kill rules and stocking was discontinued. A dead stream, right? Far from it. Pete Cooper at Brandywine Outfitters rates Valley Creek as the best fly fishing water in the region. The reason? Simply that chances of hooking a 15-inch trout are better here than anywhere else. No-kill rules permit fish to remain in the stream long enough to grow up, and in the process to produce offspring that prosper in this high quality water. The stretch from the Turnpike down through Valley Forge National Park is easily accessible. Above the Turnpike, ask permission to fish water that traverses private property.

Information

The best maps for finding your way around the urban/suburban/rural topography in the five counties are the Type 3 County General Highway maps that show waters and all roads open to public use. Obtain them from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation General Sales Store, P.O. Box 2028, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Phone: 717-787-6747.

photo-Dick Mermon



Many waterway stretches require permission from property owners to fish. An angler must put his best foot forward. Trespassing, littering or barbaric parking practices inevitably lead to more posting and less water available to the public.

Spinners for Trout

by Darl Black

I recall one of those picture-perfect memories from childhood. It was a foggy opening day of trout season on Neshannock Creek, Mercer County, in the late 1950s. Dozens of anglers lined the stream, each staking out a small section in anticipation of catching a share of recently stocked rainbows and brookies. I was a kid of 8 or 9, leaning on an overhanging tree, attempting to catch one of the many trout in a deep pool. My dad stood several feet farther down the bank fishing the tail of a riffle.

However, the trout were turning down our offerings of garden worms, salmon eggs and Velveeta cheese.

Then, out of the mist on the far side of the creek came two anglers wading upstream while casting with great accuracy. Each arched rod launched a small, glistening artificial to every nook and cranny of the streambed. Every few casts, one of them would set the hook and land a trout, which they promptly released. When they came closer to us, I identified their lures as small spinners.

While other anglers muttered about the intrusive behavior of the two, I marveled at their expertise. Spinners must be a miraculous lure for trout, I thought.

The following day, with my allowance money, I purchased one C.P. Swing. With the large bronze spinner tied to my line, I was confident of catching all the trout in the stream. On the fourth or fifth cast, the spinner hung on an underwater obstruction. My monofilament line broke when I tried to pull the spinner loose. So ended my first spinner fishing attempt.

The spinner–an oval metal blade mounted on a straight wire shaft by means of a clevis and designed to spin when drawn through the water–has long been a staple in the trout angler's arsenal. However, a spinner is a spinner to most fishermen. Yet some anglers have much higher rates of success with spinners than others. What do these anglers know that others don't?

During separate fishing outings with Frank Nale of Altoona and Bob Johns of Pittsburgh, these two outstanding spinner fishermen revealed some of their success secrets.

Frank Nale is known for catching numbers of trout on spinners. He has penned several articles based on the detailed records he keeps on the incredible number of trout he catches. The week before we fished together, Nale had just caught his 40,000th trout since he started recordkeeping 14 years ago. His best year so far was 7,148 trout in 1991. He prefers to target wild trout in small streams, and he releases all his fish.

Bob Johns is president of Heavenly Spinners, a Pennsylvania-based tackle company specializing in spinners. A lifetime of trout fishing experience and technical studies on blade performance have forged his opinions regarding spinners. He holds a number of Commission Angler Awards for trophy trout, all taken on spinners. Johns fishes for trout in streams and impoundments, and for steelhead along the Lake Erie shoreline.

The threshold concept

Ask the typical angler why spinners are effective, and he generally responds, "It represents a minnow." Of course, you can't ask the trout, but the question to put to the fish is this: With a stream full of minnows, why strike a spinner and ignore the schools of baitfish? Our experts suspect they know why.

"Spinners are just an attractor," says Nale. "It really isn't intended to represent any kind of natural bait. I've caught trout that were too small to believe a spinner was something to eat. The other day in a little Huntingdon County stream, I caught a 2-inch brook trout–it was nothing more than a minnow itself. Why would that tiny trout try to eat something that's as long as it is? That's why I think of the spinner as an attractor rather than food. It's the vibration and flash that attract the fish."

Bob Johns agrees. "A spinner is an attractor and an exciter,"

A spinner is a better choice than live bait as an all-situation lure. Even when surrounded by natural food, trout will strike a properly presented spinner.

photos-Darl Black

Some anglers have much higher rates of success with spinners than others. What do these anglers know that others don't?



Spinners *for Trout*

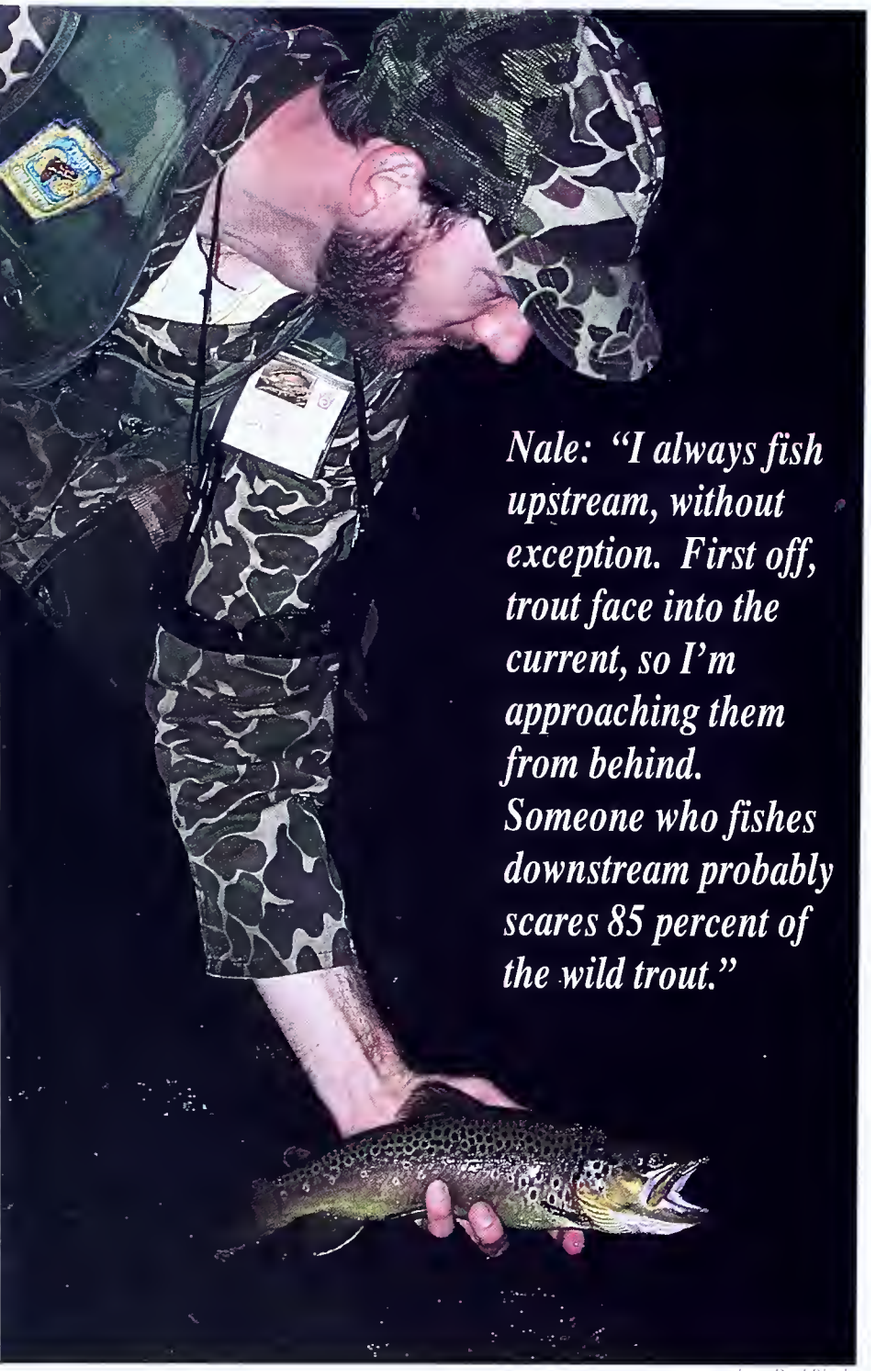


photo-Darl Black

he says. "I don't try to represent food in any way with a spinner. Instead, I attempt to bring fish to what I call the 'threshold of attraction' with the blade's impulse or vibration.

"Imagine a light bulb burning steadily, giving off light," Johns says. "You really don't notice it; the light bulb is taken for granted. But if the current is altered so the light pulsates with a strobe effect, you notice it suddenly. It annoys you.

"That is exactly what should be done with a spinner," says Johns. "You want to work a spinner at its threshold of attraction, without going too far past the threshold where it frightens fish. The desired spinner effect for trout is an irritant or agitator, rather than a threat."

Johns refers to blade research conducted by Jeb Davis, an angling engineer from Oregon. The Davis study showed that a properly designed spinner blade running at its threshold point has an attracting distance of 5 feet on all sides of the lure in clear water. In ideal conditions, this means there's a 10-foot diameter attraction sphere surrounding the spinner. According to Johns, most lures and live bait have only an 18-inch attracting sphere.

"The threshold of attraction occurs when the blade turns smoothly with a *thump-thump-thump*," Johns says. "This should not be a feverish retrieve, but rather slow, especially when using spinners with larger blades. The rod tip should be vibrating slightly, but if it starts bouncing around wildly, you are retrieving too fast."

Nale agrees that the spinner blade must be turning fast enough to produce a smooth vibration that can be felt through the rod.

If trout strike a spinner for reasons other than viewing it as food, then it follows that trout do not need to be in a feeding mood to be caught on spinners. Therefore, a spinner is a better choice than live bait as an all-situation lure. Even when surrounded by natural food, trout will strike a properly presented spinner.

Blade color, size

Nale makes his own spinners from store-bought components. In the past all his lures were made with a size 3 Indiana copper blade, five beads forming the body, and a size 10 treble hook. The finished product weighs about 1/8-ounce.

"For years that is all I used regardless of the conditions," Nale says, "but in the last two years I've started using a white painted size 3 Indiana blade sometimes. I tend to use the white blade when the water's a little bit cloudier or during low light when it is difficult for me to see the spinner in the water."

Most of Nale's fishing is done in small, shallow streams, so seeing the lure on the retrieve is an integral part of his successful routine.

Johns, however, makes a full range of spinners, from a size 0 blade to a size 5 blade, with the larger sizes directed at Great Lakes trout and salmon fishing. Johns uses an extra-thick French-style blade which he says creates more attracting vibration. The clevis rests against a patented bearing which makes the blade turn freely at very slow speeds. All this contributes to his threshold of attraction concept.

Each angler has developed his approach to spinners with slightly different blade shapes. For comparison's sake, Nale's size 3 Indiana is about the same size as Johns' size 2 French blade. Other blade styles, such as willow-leaf and Colorado are distinctively different in shape, spin speed, lift and vibration characteristics.

For years, anglers have been instructed to use silver blades under bright conditions and gold under cloudy skies. Johns disagrees.

"With high sun, clear water, and generally bright conditions, go with polished brass," emphasizes Johns. "In low light or dirty water, use silver. Polished silver is too bright for bright light conditions; it turns trout off. However, in subdued light conditions or muddy water, that brightness is turned into an advantage by being an attractor."

During low flows with extremely clear water, Johns recommends a black blade. He insists too much flash can actually frighten fish under these conditions.

As for blade size, Johns believes in going to smaller blades in warm water situations and larger blades for cooler water of spring and fall. Generally, he uses sizes 0, 1, 2 and 3 for inland fishing.

Neither Johns nor Nale believes dressing a spinner's hook with hair or feathers does anything to improve the attractiveness of the spinner. However, Johns does add color tubing to the shank of the treble hooks on larger spinners to direct hits toward the hook instead of the blade.

Nale, who fishes many tiny native trout streams, uses only clear 4-pound test, believing heavier diameter or fluorescent lines spook fish.

Johns uses line ranging from 4-pound to 12-pound test, with the heavier lines reserved for Great Lakes trout. He thinks that line diameter does not have an effect on spinner performance. "Use what you are comfortable with," is his motto.

Retrieves

Johns says there is nothing magic about a spinner retrieve. He relates a story of meeting a young fellow about 12 years old and his dad on a stocked trout stream early in the season. The boy said, "We never catch any fish. We just come here to go fishing." Johns gave the boy a spinner, tied it on his line, and provided some quick instructions. In five or six casts, the boy had his first trout on the line.

In lakes and big rivers, anglers often fail to retrieve a spinner deeply enough. Besides missing the peak attracting vibration by moving a spinner too fast, the faster you retrieve, the higher in the water a lure climbs. It's not necessary to crawl the spinner smack on the bottom, but slow it down enough to feel the *tick-tick-tick* of the blade, Johns says.

In deep water, let the spinner sink all the way to the bottom on the first cast while counting it down. Then on successive casts, begin the retrieve at the countdown point just a couple of feet off the bottom.

"When fishing flowing water, cast upstream, retrieve downstream keeping your rod tip high, and reeling fast enough to keep slack out of the line," says Johns. "This lets the blade spin freely and swim with the current. With the smaller blades, you don't feel the strong vibrations that larger spinners produce for lake fishing."

Nale concurs with Johns about downstream retrieves, but Nale has developed a very precise plan for fishing a stream. "I always fish upstream, without exception. First off, trout face into the current, so I'm approaching them from behind. Someone who fishes downstream probably scares 85 percent of the wild trout.

"On a small stream, the retrieve is pretty much with the current because there's no other way to do it. You must retrieve the spinner faster than the current to feel the blade working.

"On larger streams, I try to cast at angles of 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock while working upstream. If I make a 1 o'clock cast, I instantly move my rod to 3 o'clock while keeping the tip low, and then I eventually move the rod to 5 or 6 o'clock. By doing this I am trying to maintain roughly a 90-degree angle between the rod tip and line, thereby keeping slack out of the line. At 90 degrees, strikes are much easier to detect and the rod is in a better position for a hookset."

Nale does not waste casts in what he considers unproductive water. He is constantly on the move to cover as much water as possible.

Flat-water pools typically are not good for spinner fishing, according to Nale. In a pool, trout have too much time to follow the spinner and look it over. Nale may make a few casts along the deep edge of a pool, but he usually works through the area rapidly.

Riffles draw Nale's main focus. Not only does this kind of water hold more trout, but fish must react quickly to the lure as it goes by. He looks for faster water with lots of objects (rocks, logs, overhanging brush) to break the current, but he avoids the middle of a riffle where wild trout would have to expend too much energy to hold. His casts are relatively short, but very accurate, bringing the spinner past the object or current break.

Johns says that trout in flat water (pool, lake, etc.) strike a spinner if it is retrieved at a speed that puts out the right vibration or agitation. This is why he focuses on developing smooth-running spinners that "thump" at slow to moderate speeds.

Both Nale and Johns point to cool water temperatures as the most productive time for spinner fishing.

When the temperature climbs into the mid-60s on Lake Erie and impoundments, Johns concedes the best spinner fishing is coming to an end because trout seek deeper, cooler water. However, he points out that small headwater streams maintain a lower water temperature through summer than large creeks or rivers, so a switch may be necessary.

For small streams, Nale prefers water temperature in the upper 50s and low 60s. "That's not to say colder water can't be awesome at times. I've caught and released 100 trout a day with the temperature in the mid-40s."

Whether you fish small streams or big waters for trout, spinners can be very productive. Consider the advice of these experts to improve your catch rate in the upcoming season of trout fishing.

Nale's Special Cast

Frank Nale uses a special underhand cast that lets him fish small trout streams quickly and efficiently. His cast is very similar to what bass fishermen do when flipping into heavy cover.

Nale refers to the cast as one-dimensional–directed straight ahead so that the only thing he is concerned about is the distance to the target. In this kind of cast, the lure does not go high, or to the left or right, as it might in an overhead or sidearm cast. Instead, the spinner travels straight and low.

"I hold my rod in my right hand, and the line in my left hand tightly between my fingers. The bail is open. My left hand is roughly one foot from the reel. On the average the lure hangs 3 1/2 feet from the rod tip, although this varies with different situations.

"I rock the spinner back toward me. As it reaches the apex of the back swing, I first lower the rod tip and then raise the rod tip as the spinner begins its forward momentum. This gives power to the flip cast. I release the line as the lure swings outward from the rod tip."

He executes this cast faster and more accurately than an angler can accomplish with an ordinary overhead cast.–*DB.*

1994 Expanded Trout Fishing Opportunities

by Tom Greene

New waters

Lehigh Canal, Northampton County. A 2.4-mile section from the Monocacy Creek crossing downstream to the SR 3005 bridge in Freemansburg has been approved for stocking in 1994. This water will receive preseason and inseason plantings of brown and rainbow trout.

Cowanesque River, Tioga County. The addition of a 7.5-mile segment of stream from the Westfield Borough line downstream to the confluence of Troupes Creek has been approved for stocking in 1994. Brook and rainbow trout will be planted for opening day.

French Creek South Branch, Chester County. Contiguous with the stocked portion of French Creek, the lower 1.0-mile section of the South Branch will be added to the catchable trout program in 1994. This water will receive preseason and inseason plantings of brown and rainbow trout.

West Valley Creek, Chester County. A 2.1-mile section from SR 0100 downstream to near SR 2020 has been approved for stocking. Brown and rainbow trout will be planted during the preseason and inseason stocking periods.

Deep Creek, Schuylkill County. A new 7.3-mile section from T-478 downstream to the mouth has been added to the program. This segment is scheduled to receive preseason and inseason plantings of brown and rainbow trout.

Kishacoquillas Creek, Mifflin County. An additional 2.0-mile stretch of stream from the Mill Street bridge in Lewistown downstream to the mouth has been approved for catchable trout stocking in 1994. Brown and rainbow trout will be planted preseason and inseason.

Frances Slocum Lake, Luzerne County. This 165-acre impoundment will provide additional angling opportunities in the greater Wilkes Barre/Scranton area. Brook, brown and rainbow trout will be planted inseason only in 1994.

Lions Lake, Lebanon County. The addition of this 7-acre lake will provide expanded trout angling opportunities near the city of Lebanon. Preseason and inseason plantings of rainbow trout will take place in 1994.

Harveys Lake, Luzerne County. In addition to continuing fingerling stocking, the planting of catchable trout will also be scheduled in this large "two-story" impoundment. Brown and rainbow trout will be planted inseason only in 1994.

Duck Harbor Pond, Wayne County. This large "two-story" impoundment will also receive a planting of catchable trout to go along with fingerling stocking. Brown and rainbow trout will be planted preseason only in 1994.

Lake Loch Lomond, Pike County. This small 5.5-acre pond, located within National Park Service holdings, has been added to the catchable trout program in 1994. The lake is scheduled to receive preseason and inseason plantings of brook, brown and rainbow trout.

Deep Creek Dam, Montgomery County. In cooperation with the Montgomery County Parks Department, this 25-acre impoundment has been added to the catchable trout program. Preseason and inseason plantings of brown and rainbow trout will be made in 1994.

Expansions to current stocked waters

The stocking program on the following waters will be increased because of extensions of currently approved water and/or classification changes: **Cascade Creek**, Erie County; **Upper Woods Pond**, Wayne County; **Lizard Creek**, Carbon County; **Mahoning Creek**, Carbon County; **West Branch Brandywine Creek**, Chester County; **Little Shamokin Creek**, Northumberland County; **Middle Spring Creek**, Cumberland County; **Big Spring Creek**, Cumberland County; **Little Buffalo Creek**, Perry County; **Upper Gravel Pit**, Erie County; **Mill Creek**, Mercer County; **Little Neshannock Creek West Branch**, Mercer County; **Bens Creek**, Somerset County; **Sandy Creek**, Venango County; **East Fork Sinnemahoning Creek**, Potter County; **West Branch Cowley Run**, Potter County; **Fishing Creek**, York County; **Spring Creek**, Berks County; **West Branch Tionesta Creek**, Warren County; **Aylesworth Creek Lake**, Lackawanna County; **Decker Brook**, Pike County; **Dyberry Creek**, Wayne County; **Jones Creek**, Wayne County; **Lake Minisink**, Pike County; **Little Mud Pond**, Pike County; **Conewago Creek**, Adams County; **Beaverdam Creek**, Blair County; **Canoe Creek**, Blair County; **Blacklog Creek**, Huntingdon/Juniata County; **Standing Stone Creek**, Huntingdon County; **Little Beaver River North Fork**, Beaver County; **Merli-Sarnoski Lake**, Lackawanna County; **Harvey Creek**, Luzerne County; **Lackawaxen River**, Wayne County; and **Hidden Lake**, Monroe County.

New delayed-harvest waters

Little Pine Creek, Lycoming County. In cooperation with Little Pine State Park (DER) and the Tiadaghton Sportsmen's Club, delayed-harvest, artifical-lures-only management will go into effect on a 1.0-mile section of stream beginning March 1, 1994. The new area is located from the confluence of Carson

Run downstream to the confluence with Schoolhouse Hollow.

Tunungwant Creek, West Branch, McKean County. In cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh (Bradford campus), a 1.2-mile segment from the T-499 bridge downstream to the pipeline crossing near the confluence with Gates Hollow was added to the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program effective January 1, 1994. In addition, this section represents a new water added to the 1994 catchable trout program.

Allegheny River, Potter County. In cooperation with private landowners and the God's Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited, a 2.7-mile section is managed under the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program effective January 1, 1994. The new area extends from John Patterson's pond road downstream to the stream ford, 550 yards downstream of Prosser Hollow.

Muncy Creek, Lycoming County. In cooperation with the Consolidated Sportsmen of Muncy Creek, Creekside Rod and Gun Club and private landowners, a 1.1-mile stretch will be added to the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program beginning March 1, 1994. The new area is located from 600 yards upstream of the T-650 bridge downstream to near the confluence with Big Run at Tivoli.

Extended delayed-harvest areas

Neshannock Creek, Lawrence County. In cooperation with private landowners, the section now managed for delayed harvest, artificial lures only was extended upstream 1.2 miles. New section limits are from the Volant Borough limits downstream to the covered bridge (SR 1009). Regulations on the extended portion went into effect January 1, 1994.

Extended trophy trout waters

Lackawanna River, Lackawanna County. In cooperation with the Lackawanna River Corridor Association and private landowners, the section now managed under Trophy Trout regulations was extended downstream 2.4 miles. New limits are from White Oak Creek in Archbald downstream to the Lackawanna Avenue bridge in Olyphant. Regulations on the extended portion of this fine wild trout water were effective January 1, 1994.

Loss of angling opportunities

Sections of streams listed below will receive a reduced allocation in 1994 because of an increase in the amount of posting.

West Valley Creek, Chester County; **Toms Run**, Adams County; Patterson Creek, Armstrong County.

At the time of printing, the amount of water open to public angling access had been reduced on the following waters because of posting by railroad holdings.

Sinnemahoning Creek, Driftwood Branch, Cameron County; **Sinnemahoning, Portage Creek**, Cameron County; and **West Creek**, Cameron/Elk counties.

New Class A sections for 1994

The following sections have been identified as supporting Class A wild trout populations and will be removed from the Approved Trout Waters list in favor of wild trout management in 1994.

Weikert Run. Union County, 2.8 miles, from the confluence with Little Weikert Run downstream to the mouth.

Beaver Dam Run. Clinton County, 1.6 miles, from the confluence of Beaver Dam Run Left Fork and Beaver Dam Run Right Fork downstream to the mouth.

Germania Branch. Potter County, 2.2 miles, from the confluence with Straight Run downstream to the mouth.

Kettle Creek. Potter County, 7.6 miles, from the confluence with Billings Branch downstream to the confluence with Long Run.

Trout Run. Clinton County, 2.4 miles, from the confluence of Greene Branch and Calhoun Branch downstream to the mouth.

Middle Creek. Monroe County, 4.9 miles, from 0.25 km above T-444 downstream to the mouth.

Codorus Creek. York County, 3.3 miles, from SR 3047 bridge downstream to SR 0116 bridge.

Saucon Creek. Northampton County, 3.5 miles, from the confluence with the Black River downstream to SR 0412.

East Branch Standing Stone Creek. Huntingdon County, 9.1 miles, from the dam at Greenwood Furnace State Park downstream to the mouth.

Class B wild trout sections for 1994

The expansion of wild trout management received widespread support by the anglers interviewed in the Trout Anglers Telephone Survey, reported in the November 1993 *Pennsylvania Angler*. In keeping with this concept, the following stream sections supporting biomass Class B wild trout populations have been removed from the approved trout waters list in favor of wild trout management in 1994.

Allegheny Portage Creek. McKean County, 1.6 miles, from Brown Hollow downstream to Scaffold Lick Run.

Straight Creek South Fork. Elk County, 2.2 miles, from the headwaters downstream to the confluence with the first tributary upstream from Carlson Hollow.

Wolf Run. Centre County, 3.5 miles, from Wolf Run trail downstream to the confluence with Little Wolf Run.

Grays Run. Lycoming County, 2.2 miles, from boundary of Grays Run and State Forest Lands downstream to CCC bridge near the intersection of T-842 and T-482.

Jeans Run. Carbon County, 2.5 miles, from the source downstream to the state game lands.

In addition, the following Class B fisheries have been removed from the approved trout waters list in 1994 because of an increase in the amount of posting.

Clear Creek. Cameron County, 5.3 miles, from the confluence of Mud Run downstream to the mouth.

Blacks Creek. Tioga County, 2.3 miles, from SR 0414 downstream to 0.5 km downstream of SR 2001 and SR 2002 intersection.

Black Creek. Sullivan County, 3.0 miles, from SR 4018 downstream to the mouth.

Aquashicola Creek. Monroe/Carbon County, 9.3 miles, from Chicola Lake Dam downstream to the confluence with Buckwha Creek.

North Fork Powell Creek. Dauphin County, 4.1 miles, from T-551 bridge downstream to the mouth.

Laurel Run. Union County, 3.4 miles, from the confluence with Bear Run downstream to the SR 0235 bridge.

Pine Creek. Centre County, 3.1 miles, from the second forest road bridge above SR 0045 downstream to SR 0045.

Lick Creek. Sullivan County, 4.0 miles, from unnamed trib near the Sullivan/Bradford County line downstream to the mouth.

Gibson Creek. Susquehanna County, 1.8 miles, from the pond at Shady Rest Campground downstream to the mouth.

Start with STEELHEADS

by Mike Bleech

Last fall began what many are calling the best season yet in Pennsylvania steelhead waters. During a good morning, skilled anglers commonly caught a half-dozen to a dozen steelheads in the 7-pound to 10-pound class.

But a visit to any of the more popular steelhead creeks–Elk, Walnut, and Twentymile–shows that only a small portion of the anglers there are skilled at steelhead fishing. During all but the really wild days, and there are some of those, a few anglers stand out by their success. Typically, most anglers have no more than one or two steelheads, while a couple in the same vicinity has hooked a dozen or more.

Sometimes the result has been that the less successful anglers have crowded around the most successful ones, assuming, sometimes correctly, that the successful anglers have located a honey hole. But more often I have observed a polite respect as novice anglers watched from a distance and tried to learn. I am not sure why it seems so, but I believe the attitudes and behavior among steelhead anglers is quite different from salmon anglers in these same creeks. Though they are probably, for the most part, the same anglers, steelhead anglers seem less frantic, more inclined toward high sporting standards.

Maybe this is because steelheads have not been desecrated by legalized snagging.

Serious tactics

The key elements of serious stream steelhead strategy are timing, a clean terminal rig, scent, matching the bait or lure to the mood of the steelheads, and drifting the bait or lure.

First consider timing. Steelheads are liable to be in the Lake Erie tributary streams anytime from September through the following June. Local steelhead enthusiasts can afford to check the creeks from time to time during the marginal times. But if you have to travel far, especially if you are just getting started at steelhead fishing, you might want to concentrate on the peak periods.

March, April and May are excellent months for steelheading. Usually there are plenty of fish in the creeks, at least in the larger creeks, and the weather is usually tolerable. Stream flow is most often adequate. October, November and early December are also excellent for the same reasons.

Fishing can be good during January and February, but the weather is often–no, make that *usually*–nasty. Warm spells that cause enough melting to raise and color the creeks usually lead to good fishing.

Note that fishing is closed in the tributaries from the end of March until the opening of the regular statewide trout fishing season. Trout and steelhead season is open year-around in Lake Erie.

On a short-term basis, creek flow is the key to the number of steelheads that are in the creeks, and to fishing quality. Steelheads generally enter the creeks in the greatest numbers while creek flow is high. In fact, in many cases they cannot even get into the creeks during periods of low flow. Fishing is generally best when the creeks have some color, but are not muddy. Somewhat muddy water suits me better than very clear water. The colored water seems to make the steelheads more active, and you can get away with using heavier line than in clear water.

If I picked one particular time to fish for steelheads, it would be after the peak of a high-flow period, when the water is just beginning to lose its color, but still has some color. By the calendar, it would be anywhere between mid-October and the end of the following May.

Steelheads are line-shy, and shy of too much terminal rigging. The heavier your line, the more junk you add to the terminal rig, the fewer hits you get. This is compounded as the water gets clearer.

As a general rule, use only the terminal gear you absolutely need. Avoid things like snaps, swivels and large hooks. My standard terminal rig is one or two small splitshot above a very sharp, fine-wire hook. I like a wide gap hook such as the Eagle Claw No. 42. The distance between the shot and the hook depends on how close I want the lure to the bottom. Usually the colder the water the closer to the bottom I want it, with 6 inches about as close as it gets.

Another excellent terminal rig adds a float to the preceding rig. The float keeps the lure or bait at a precise depth, avoiding most snags. Even more important, the float acts as a strike indicator. Detecting strikes is one of the most difficult parts about steelhead fishing. Use only very small floats, because steelhead quickly reject a bait if they feel the drag of a larger float.

Use only fine-diameter, low-visibility line–8-pound in cloudy water, 4-pound or 2-pound in very clear water, 6-pound as an all-around compromise. The reason noodle rods came into existence a few decades ago was to handle large, hard-fighting steelheads on ultralight line. Of the times that I have been significantly out-fished on steelhead creeks, the anglers who out-fished me usually were using finer line.



Another reason I was often out-fished years ago was scent. Steelheads rely heavily on the sense of smell. Like salmon, this sense likely guides them to their spawning waters. They can detect odors present in scant parts per million. I am not so sure which odors frighten them, or offend them. But I am certain that some odors attract them, or at least encourage them to hold a bait or lure longer.

Now I always add scent to my lures when fishing for steelheads. My usual lure is a small, fake egg cluster with a drop of scent. Though many experts believe strongly that the fresh egg skein is most effective, and I agreed for several years, I use the fake eggs with scent primarily because they are less bother and I believe every bit as effective. Fresh eggs are not always available, and at best–unless you have your own source for fresh eggs at hand–it takes a stop at a tackle shop on every fishing trip. I prefer to fill my tackle box with fake eggs and scent at my leisure so I can fish on short notice.

There is no doubt that lure color can make a big difference in steelhead fishing success. Adding color to bait is often important. Orange has most often been my more effective lure color. Others that I carry are chartreuse, lime-green, medium-green, bright-red, and amber.

Lure size is also important. Small lures or baits are usually best. I like a fake egg sack about the size of a thumbnail or fingernail.

Most anglers think of salmon eggs when they think of steelhead bait, but other fish eggs can be as good or better. Some anglers use sucker eggs because suckers spawn in the creeks when steelheads are there during early spring. Trout eggs are also effective.

Other baits such as nightcrawlers, shiners and grubs catch steelheads. Grubs are sometimes the most effective baits when fishing is slow, and during the winter. I have seen some days when nightcrawlers worked best, usually during spring at the mouths of creeks.

Anchoring the bait to the bottom in one place can take a few steelheads. There might even be some cases when it is the best tactic, or so I have been told, but I have not seen it happen. Drifting the bait or lure with the current puts that lure or bait in front of more steelheads than letting it sit in one place. And I believe steelheads prefer it moving with the current. That is, after all, the natural way they get food in creeks.

Use just enough weight to keep the lure moving along the bottom. This results in some snags, but that is part of the game. Check your line often, because scraping the light line over rocks will nick it.

Where to fish

Steelheads enter just about every Lake Erie tributary with enough water for them to swim. But many creeks, and at least parts of every creek, flow through private land where anglers are not welcome. You find the most fishing opportunity in the larger creeks, especially at Elk Creek and Walnut Creek, where there are public access areas. These creeks get more than their share of steelheads. However, fishing pressure does get heavy on weekends when the weather is moderate.

Steelheads can also be caught by trolling or casting in Lake Erie, particularly near the creek mouths. The public boat access areas at Elk and Walnut creeks put you in the heart of the steelhead water.

These fabulous fish have even more vigor in the open waters of the lake. They might jump a dozen times, and run 100 yards of line off a reel, then bulldog for another 20 minutes.

Spoons and lures that imitate slender minnows are effective for lake fishing. Use the same colors as in the creeks–red, orange, green, chartreuse, all in combination with silver, gold or white.

Regardless of things you might have heard about fishing elsewhere in the Great Lakes, steelhead fishing in the Pennsylvania portion of Lake Erie and in its tributaries is better than ever. Do not let another year go by without trying it.

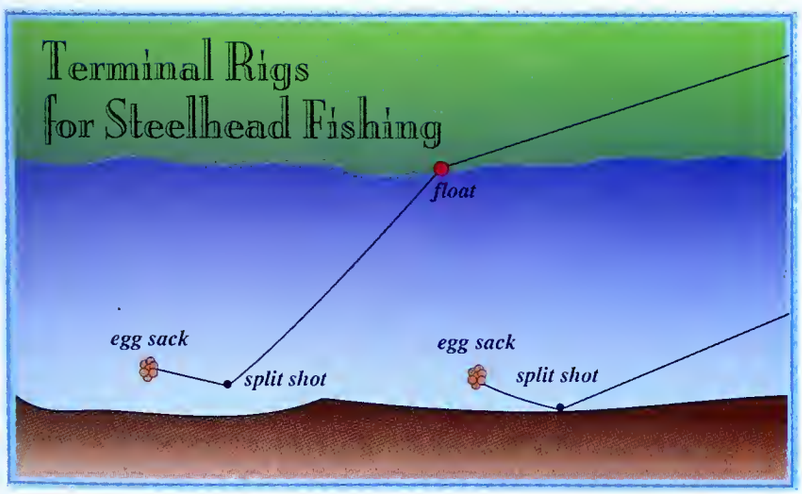


photo-Mike Bleech; graphic-Ted Walke

Southwest Pennsylvania TROUT LAKES

by Jeff Knapp

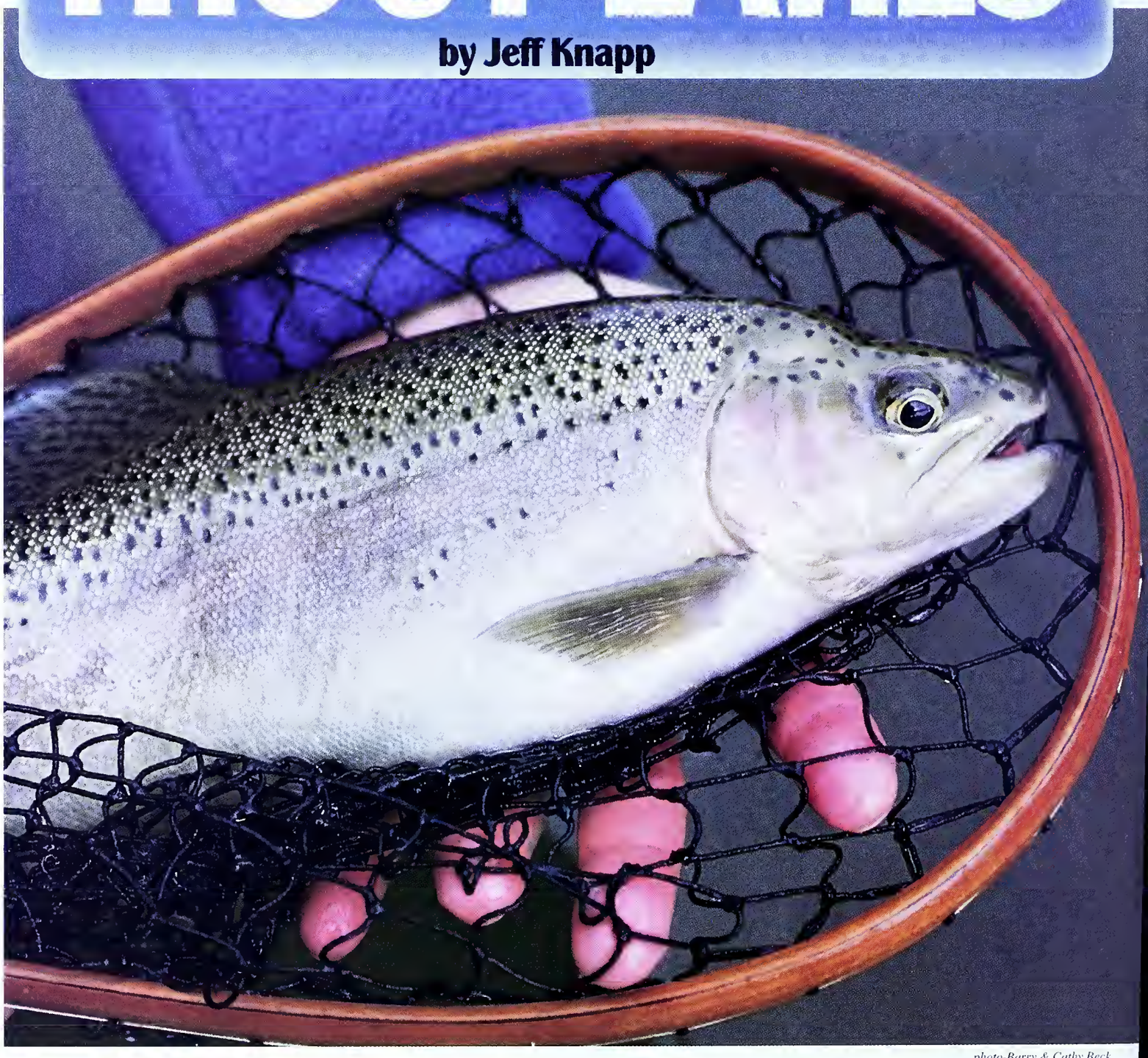


photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

The skills needed to negotiate a stream aren't necessary to catch trout from lakes. Such waters also provide anglers who prefer to fish from boats a good shot at trout.

Pennsylvania's many miles of stocked and wild trout waters tend to overshadow other trout fishing options. The Fish & Boat Commission also manages nearly 100 lakes and ponds for trout, and these waters furnish a chance to fish for coldwater species in a stillwater environment.

Even though large, deep lakes like Lake Wallenpaupack, Kinzua Lake and Raystown Lake produce the occasional magnum-sized trout, the majority of Pennsylvania's trout lakes are under 100 acres, and rely on put-and-take plantings of legal-sized trout to provide the fishery. Fingerlings go into these huge lakes because they are not managed as approved trout waters.

The added sport provided by trout lakes is important to anglers, particularly in the southwestern portion of the state, where mining operations of decades long past continue to kill many potential trout waters.

In addition to the additive function of lakes as trout fisheries, these waterways also contribute a distinctly different environment for trout anglers. Because of their physical nature, most lakes aren't subject to the high, muddy water often experienced during the early part of trout season. Last year's opening weekend was a perfect example, when high water wiped out fishing efforts on many of the state's streams.

Lakes also make great places to introduce young anglers to trout fishing. The skills needed to negotiate a stream aren't necessary to catch trout from lakes. Such waters also provide anglers who prefer to fish from boats a good shot at trout.

In many cases the waters flowing either in or out of the lake (in some cases, both) are trout-stocked streams, so it's possible to combine lake and stream fishing quite easily in the same day. Later in the season, additional fishing benefits are provided by the warmwater species that inhabit most of the stocked trout lakes.

Recently I asked Commission Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson to list a few trout lakes in his district that provide productive springtime fishing, and receive less than the mob-like attention many lakes get in the early season. Lorson manages much of the waters that fall within the Commission's Southwest Region.

Lorson's evaluation revealed five lakes that met the criteria: Donegal Lake, Dunlap Creek Lake, Laurel Hill Lake, Raccoon Lake and Dutch Fork Lake. These waters range in size from 50 to 101 acres, and have a few things in common in addition to their relatively modest acreage.

All are stocked both preseason and inseason with legal-sized brown and rainbow trout, with greater numbers of the latter. They also receive stockings of "trophy" palomino trout, and brood stock rainbows and browns. The palominos range from 14 to 18 inches. The rainbow and brown trout breeders go 18 to 22 inches.

"We stock these lakes several times because we think they can handle the load," says Lorson. "We want to spread the recreation out."

Brown and rainbow trout are more temperature-tolerant, and are typically stocked in many of the state's trout lakes. Browns are harder to catch, and tend to stick around a bit longer. Rainbows provide fish that are somewhat easier to fool.

In the case of these southwestern Pennsylvania lakes, Lorson says most retain good numbers of trout through the Fourth of July. After that, he says, heat-related stress takes its toll on the trout.

Here's a closer look at Lorson's picks:

Donegal Lake. Donegal Lake, 90 acres, is owned by the Fish and Boat Commission. It's located in Westmoreland County, just off Route 711, between Ligonier and Donegal. It reaches a maximum depth of about 25 feet.

According to Lorson, overabundant weeds had been a problem at Donegal, but the situation has been rectified by winter drawdowns during alternating years. Rick also noted a decrease in fishing pressure at Donegal over the past couple of years.

This spring, Donegal will receive a pre-season allotment of 1,400 browns and 5,000 rainbows. The lake will be stocked six times during the season. When the spring's inseason stocking



Hardware like spoons and spinners is effective. Let the lure sink before starting the retrieve. Experiment by working lures at different depths until you score.

Southwest Pennsylvania TROUT LAKES

is complete–around early June–another 7,960 rainbows and 2,540 brown trout (10,500 total) will have been planted in Donegal's waters.

Shore fishing access to Donegal is considered good. Four Mile Run is stocked with trout below the lake.

In addition to the trout fishing opportunities, Donegal also has bass, panfish, tiger muskies, channel catfish, walleyes and saugeyes (walleye x sauger hybrid).

Dunlap Creek Lake. Dunlap Creek Lake, 50 acres, is in Fayette County, near Uniontown, north of Route 21. It is controlled by the Fish and Boat Commission and Fayette County.

This steep-sided impoundment reaches a depth of about 35 feet. Like Donegal Lake, Dunlap Creek Lake once suffered from too much aquatic vegetation.



"We had some weed problems there," says Lorson. "We drew it down one time and it seems to be under control now." That drawdown took place about three years ago.

Dunlap's preseason shot of trout will total 7,200, and will be comprised of 1,500 browns and 5,700 rainbows. The inseason allotment will be distributed in five stockings, adding a total of 9,500 trout–6,900 rainbows and 2,600 browns.

Dunlap Creek Lake is considered to have good shoreline access. Dunlap Creek itself is stocked below the lake.

According to Lorson, warmwater species include bass, panfish, channel cats, saugeyes and walleyes.

"We found some nice walleyes in Dunlap," says Lorson of a recent Commission survey he conducted on the lake.

Laurel Hill Lake. Laurel Hill State Park is the home of Laurel Hill Lake, in Somerset County. It's located a few miles west of Somerset on Route 31.

The lake covers 62 acres and has a maximum depth of about 20 feet. It has a steep-dropping shoreline on one side and a shallow one on the other.

According to Lorson, the Department of Environmental Resources did much renovation work to Laurel Hill recently. The lake was lowered, and boating and fishing areas where dredged. An additional boat access area was added near the dam, as was a handicapped access fishing pier, also located near the dam.

Laurel Hill's preseason numbers indicate a stocking of 4,900 trout–3,430 rainbows and 1,470 browns. The lake is scheduled to be stocked three times during the season with an additional 4,500 trout–2,550 rainbows and 1,950 browns.

The best shoreline access is found along the shallow side of the lake. Camping is available in the state park.

In addition to the lake fishing, plenty of stream fishing is also available close by. Jones' Mill Run, a secondary feeder stream to the lake, is a stocked trout stream. Laurel Hill Creek itself is stocked both above and below the lake. A 2.2-mile delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only project is located above the lake.

Warmwater species include bluegills, smallmouth bass and yellow perch.

"With the lake recently drawn down and refilled, the nutrients there should have provided some pretty good growing conditions for those warmwater species," says Lorson.

Raccoon Lake. Like Laurel Hill, Raccoon Lake is in one of our state parks, Beaver County's Raccoon Creek State Park. It is located just east of Route 18 in Hanover Township.

The lake covers just over 100 acres, and has a maximum depth of about 23 feet. It also has a steep shoreline and a shallow one.

A total of 5,100 trout will have been stocked into Beaver Lake's waters before the opening of trout season. Four inseason stockings will follow, adding another 6,500–4,900 rainbows and 1,600 browns.

In many cases the waters flowing either in or out of the lake (in some cases, both) are trout-stocked streams, so it's possible to combine lake and stream fishing quite easily in the same day.

photo-Russ Gettig

Below Raccoon Lake, Traverse Creek is stocked with trout, providing nearby stream fishing. Camping is available within the state park.

Channel catfish, muskies, walleyes and saugeyes make up Raccoon Lake's warmwater species.

Dutch Fork Lake. Washington County is home to Dutch Fork Lake. It is located just north of Interstate 70 near the West Virginia border. A Fish and Boat Commission lake, it covers 91 acres and is about 28 feet at its deepest spot. The lake has fairly steep, dropping shorelines on both sides.

Some 1,700 brown and 4,500 rainbow trout make up Dutch Fork's preseason allotment, providing anglers with at least 6,200 trout when the season gets under way. Six inseason stockings will add another 7,500 trout–5,500 rainbow and 2,000 brown.

Shoreline fishing access is good on the road side of the lake. Dutch Fork Creek, below the lake, is stocked trout water.

Saugeyes, channel catfish, muskies (purebred and tigers) bass and panfish account for the warmwater fishes.

The Commission stocks liberal numbers of trout into all five of these lakes both before and during the season, but it's also likely there are holdover trout that were stocked during 1993's fall and/or winter stocking programs.

Tactics

Western Pennsylvania fishing enthusiast Lynn Gelles has been fishing stocked trout lakes for the past 20 years. During that time, he's seen plenty of the wide assortment of presentations that catch lake-bound trout.

"It's diversified," says Gelles. "Lately everybody is switching to scented baits. But the old standbys have been salmon eggs, fluorescent marshmallows, cheese and corn. A nightcrawler or a meal worm works well, too."

According to Lynn, hardware is also effective, including spoons like Dardevles and Kastmasters, and spinners such as the Rooster Tail. Shore-bound anglers do well casting these lures. Allow the lure to sink a bit before initiating the retrieve. Experiment with different "count downs," time allowed for the lure to sink, to determine the sweet depth for biting fish.

Boat anglers also fish hardware, and in some cases troll these presentations.

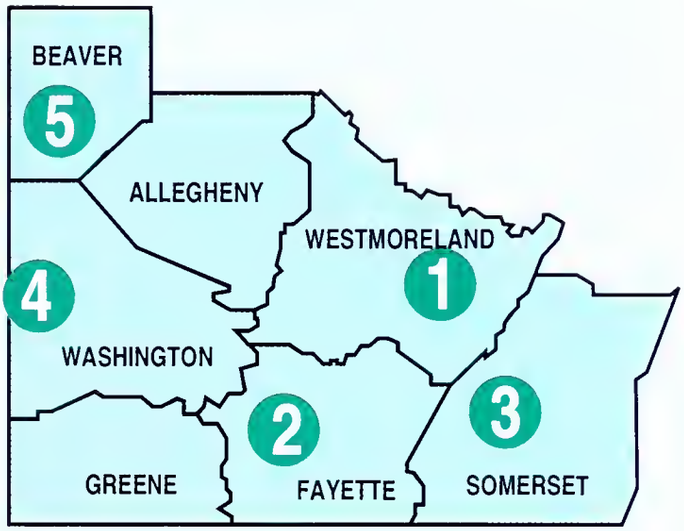
A clear casting bubble can be used in conjunction with spinning tackle to fish nymphs and wet flies. Gelles says to use about a two-pound-test leader, approximately the same length as the rod, to fish the flies. He fills the bobber with enough water to allow it to be cast a long distance into the wind.

"I throw it into the wind and let the current bring it down. It's more of a natural drift that way," he says.

Lynn's selection of wet flies and nymphs includes muskrat nymphs, a Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, Woolly Bugger, March Brown (wet) and Adams (wet).

Like many anglers, Lynn prefers stream fishing for trout, but he sees lake fishing as an excellent way to include the family in trout fishing.

The Southwest Region's trout lakes offer plenty of exciting springtime fishing opportunities, but don't forget about them come fall. All five of these lakes get stockings during either the fall or winter, sometimes both. Last fall I experienced fast trout fishing on a freshly stocked Commission lake, and I had the place to myself.



Southwest PA Trout Lakes

1. Donegal Lake
2. Dunlap Creek Lake
3. Laurel Hill Lake
4. Dutch Fork Lake
5. Raccoon Lake

Other Area Trout Lakes

The Southwest Region isn't limited to the five lakes described here. These lakes also are included in the Fish and Boat Commission's list of approved trout waters:

Lake	County
Deer Lakes	Allegheny
North Park Lake	Allegheny
Brady Run Lake	Beaver
Hereford Manor Lakes *(upper and lower)*	Beaver
Duman Dam	Cambria
Elton Sportsmen's Dam	Cambria
Lake Rowena	Cambria
Virgin Run Dam	Fayette
Duke Lake	Greene
Kooser Lake	Somerset
Canonsburg Lake	Washington
Keystone Lake	Westmoreland
Mammoth Lake	Westmoreland
Northmoreland Lake	Westmoreland
Lower Twin Lake	Westmoreland

Access Areas

Donegal Lake–One mile north of Donegal off Route 711.

Dunlap Creek Lake–North of Route 21, off T-482.

Laurel Hill Lake–Off Route 31, near Trent, in Laurel Hill State Park.

Raccoon Lake–Off Route 81, in Raccoon Creek State Park.

Dutch Fork Lake–Four miles west of Claysville on Route 40, along Route 3001. Access ramps on both east and west sides of the lake.

Remember that only electric motors are permitted on these lakes.–*JK*.

Lower Delaware River SHAD SPOTS

Perhaps the best advice for starting out for early shad is to get to the locations mentioned and watch what's going on. Sooner or later you will see shad being caught.

by Rick Methot

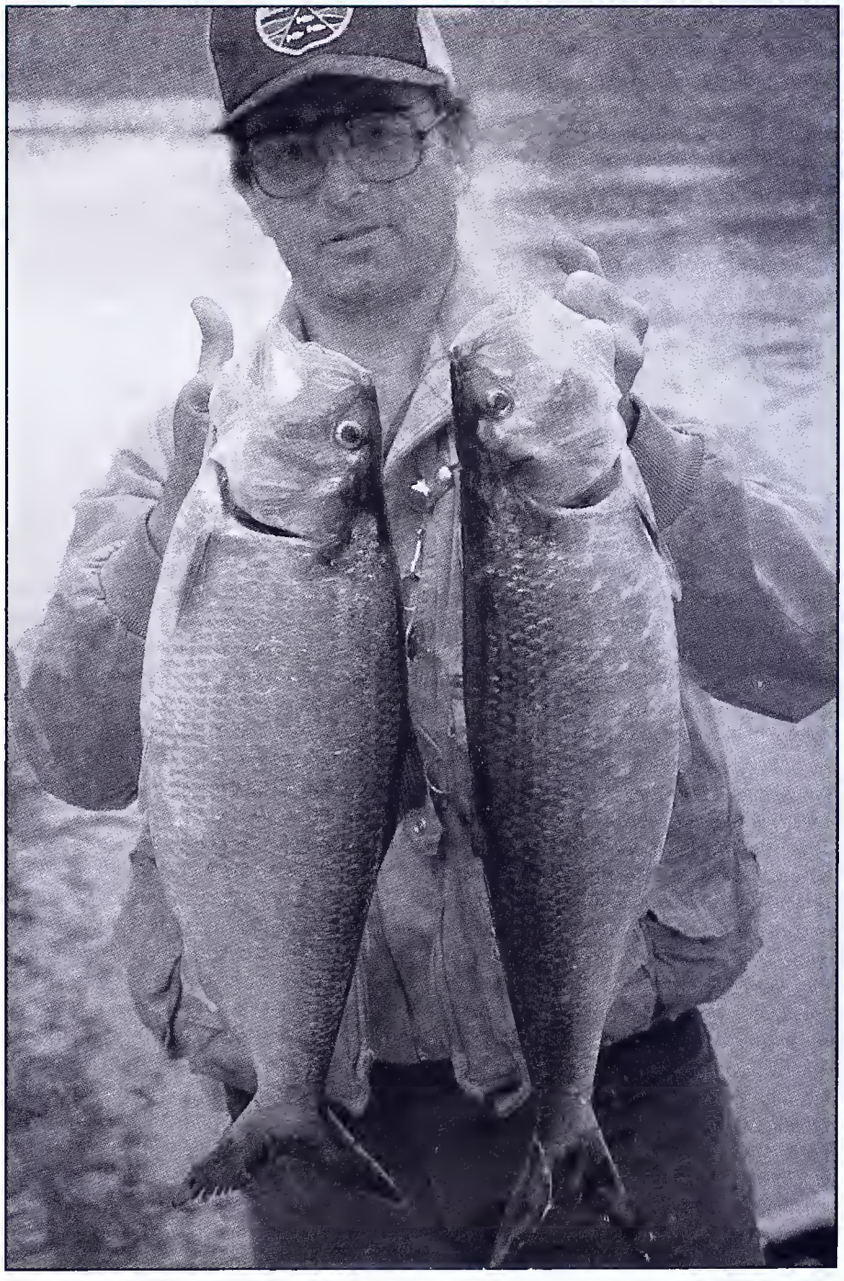


Photo-Rick Methot

Shad fishermen wanting to launch their boats from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's popular Yardley Access didn't have to put up with usually crowded conditions last spring. The parking lot was underwater.

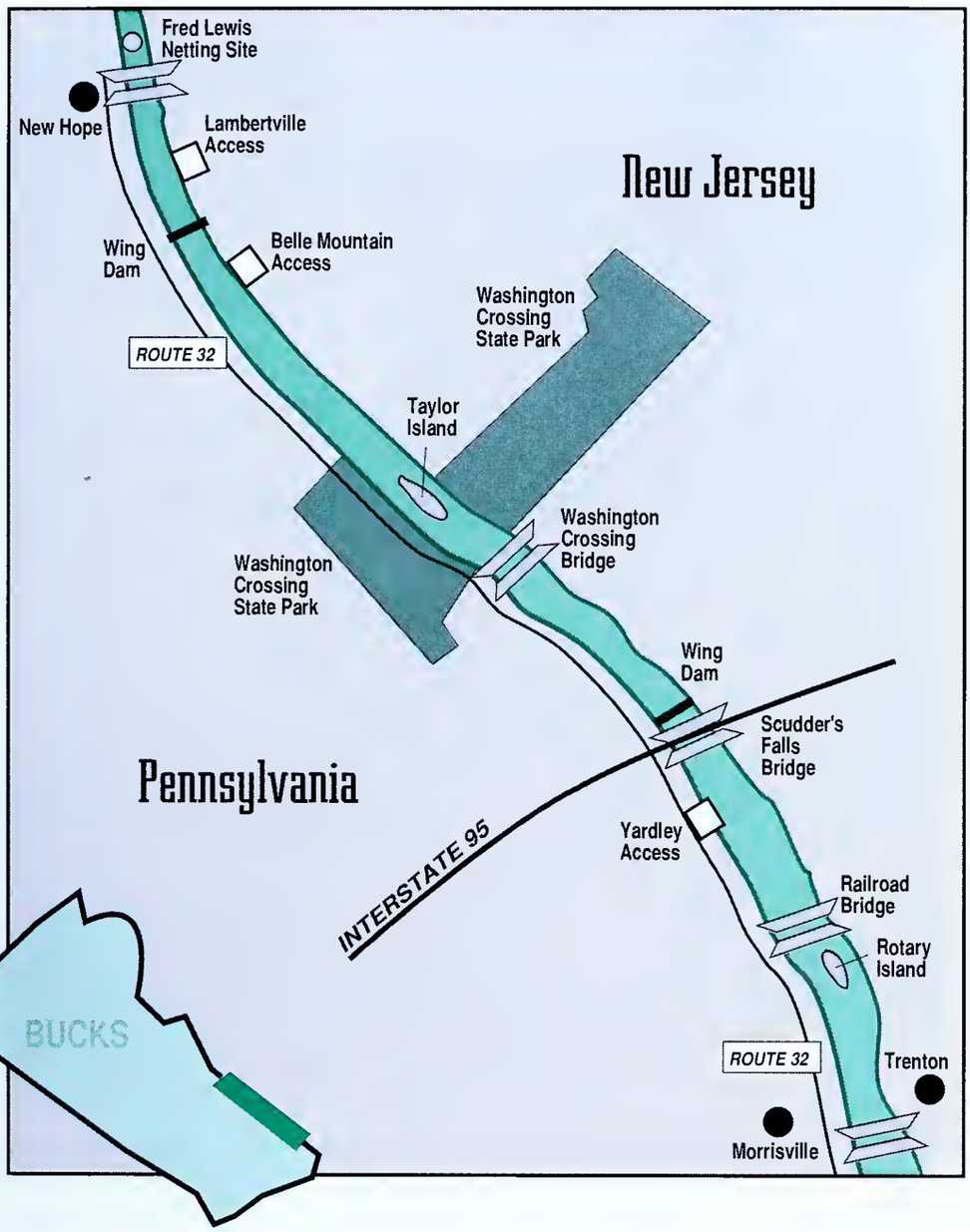
Such was the spring of '93 for much of the early shad season on the lower Delaware River. Near flood conditions forced many winter-weary shad enthusiasts into a waiting game. Anyone attempting to put any craft short of a Coast Guard cutter into those waters risked being swept out to Delaware Bay or slammed to splinters by tree trunks or other interesting nuisances to normal navigation rushing downriver.

The uninitiated remarked that anything floatable on the river should be holding regular lifeboat drills with a band playing "Nearer My God to Thee."

It's not always that way, of course, but even though river conditions and weather primarily concern anglers along the entire spring spawning route of Delaware River shad, here in the lower stretches is where the annual action begins–and it begins in an area where locals consider March the last four weeks of winter, despite what the calendar says.

If you want to get in on the first of the annual spring run of the American shad, you head south not far from where the tidal pull finally gives up and the northbound shad put themselves within reach of hook-and-line anglers.

Whether you choose to stand waist-deep in ice water or endure white-knuckle willies while heaving up and down in a tub of tin that suddenly seems as seaworthy as a forklift, the first shot at shad can be a tad dicey and the protection of your fa-



map graphic-Ted Walke

The main target of Yardley-launched anglers is the Scudder's Falls Bridge that is the I-95 conduit between Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

vorite posterior should be priority number one. More about that later.

The area from Morrisville to New Hope on the Pennsylvania side, matched by its cross-river counterparts of Trenton to Lambertville, has shad fishing opportunities for shore and boat anglers. The latter, however, have the better shot at success.

When

The first question for eager shad anglers is "when?" Though most of us who have been participating in this annual madness for more than 20 years tend to get antsy by March 1, it's usually the latter part of the month when things begin to break loose.

For the newcomer to shad fishing, as well as many veterans, the tip-off to get moving is not the sketchy reports of the first hook-and-line shad caught in this neck of the river, but what happens more than a dozen miles farther north.

There, on an east shore island across from New Hope, Fred Lewis slips his nets into the river, conditions permitting.

The Lewis family has been at the game, and back-breaking chore, since the turn of the century. For anglers with a "show-me" approach to shad fishing, there is nothing like the sight of a few hundred shad flopping in the nets to provide the impetus to start slinging darts at the critters. Some of us, who have attained the age of dotage and limited mobility, don't even bother to fish until Lewis has proof there are shad in the river. Convincing shad to smack a gaudy little lead lure is something else, of course.

Before you decide to settle back and wait for dispatches from the netting operating, keep in mind that this yardstick for measuring one's potential for success can also go awry. Last season was mostly a bust for Lewis. His island was awash. The footbridge to the mainland was suddenly among the missing in the raging waters running the color of Ovaltine.

A shad fisherman, therefore, must be flexible. Consider that for years, and even now, most anglers use the magic 50-degree water temperature mark as an indicator of the shad surge north. It's true that shad become active and the spawning urge rears its lovely head when waters warm. Also, warmer waters are usually accompanied by somewhat tolerable weather for the angler.

However, conventional wisdom has been given the deep six, almost literally, in the past few seasons with the use of downriggers to catch shad, earlier in spring and in what used to be considered "waste of time" water temperatures.

Let's assume conditions are relatively normal. The shad bush is in bloom, forsythia are popping out and the river is its usual swift, swollen self–but safe enough for wading or holding anchor in a 12-foot aluminum boat.

Where

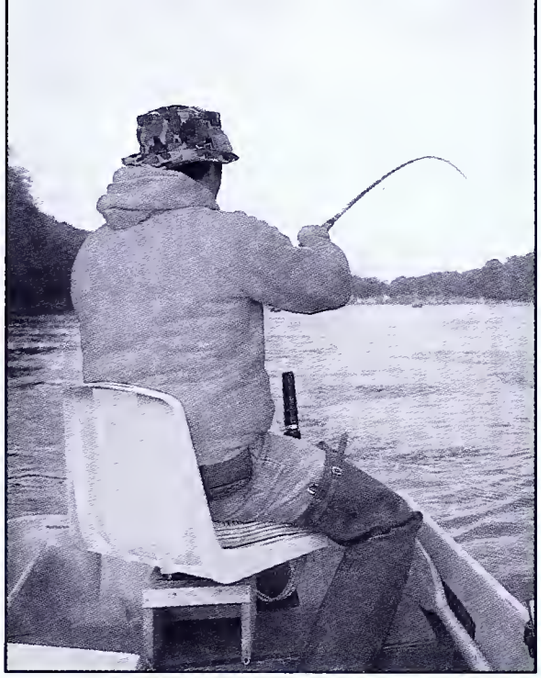
Starting downriver in the Morrisville area, there are limited shore fishing opportunities. There is a small parking area adjacent to the dikes just south of the Morrisville Bridge.

Across from the Morrisville Water Filtration Plant lies a tiny spot that could perhaps accommodate three or four cars and a one-lane launch cut that would generously be called "crude." You could get lucky on a deserted weekday and put a small boat in here, however.

This would allow a ride to Rotary Island, just south of the railroad bridge, that is a good spot for shad in the run between the west shore of the island and the Pennsylvania bank.

About four miles north on Route 32, the scenic two-lane that

Lower Delaware River SHAD SPOTS



hugs the river, is the Yardley Access, mentioned earlier. It is an excellent launch, but can get mobbed during the peak of the run in the lower stretches of the river.

The main target of Yardley-launched anglers is the Scudder's Falls Bridge that is the I-95 conduit between Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Here, anglers jockey for position in the channel that runs close to the east bank, which is the most productive spot for boaters.

The Yardley Access also allows shad chasers to head south of the Rotary Island spot, and some even brave the rapids for the next bridge, three miles north to Washington Crossing.

A word of caution: This can be a tricky run and newcomers would be advised to follow someone who has navigated the section several times before setting out solo.

The Washington Crossing Bridge, linking state parks of the same designation on both sides of the river, is a historic site that bears mention. It is here, as should be obvious by its name, on Christmas night, 1776, that General George Washington launched his attack on the Hessians encamped in Trenton. There is a reenactment every Christmas that draws thousands of onlookers. The "tourist" angle aside, the event is a good way to get a look at this section of the river well in advance of the season.

I mention this because as recently as nine years ago when I first moved to this area, nobody fished the waters at Washington Crossing Bridge for shad. The reason, perhaps, was the long run up from Yardley, or down from Lambertville on the Jersey side. But some adventurers obviously figured that if bridge abutments offered both resting and moving places for shad in one spot, why not another?

They catch shad here, lots of shad, and the number of boats has increased each spring.

It's not as packed as the tight string of boats in the Scudder's Falls channel, nor the near circus conditions spread from shore to shore at New Hope-Lambertville, but as it is in the other places, the early arrival at Washington Crossing gets the pick of the spots.

Conventional wisdom has been given the deep six, almost literally, in the past few seasons with the use of downriggers to catch shad, earlier in spring and in what used to be considered "waste of time" water temperatures.

Pennsylvania shore anglers could fish this stretch because there's plenty of parking adjacent to the park visitor's center, just a short walk from the bridge. It's not been a good area for land-based shad fishing, however, and most anglers seen here wade for smallmouth bass and stripers much later in the year. A diehard could probably heft a cartopper down to the shore to get over to the bridge channels as a few do from the Jersey side. You would, of course, be limited in the kind of boat you could muscle to the water, and any such small, lightweight craft could invite disaster in the usual fast and high spring conditions.

If you continue north to Route 32, there is a small "pull off" clearing with a two-rut route to the river. Small boats are launched here, but the parking area is limited to two or three cars. The sport is just up the road from the Black Tulip restaurant.

There are rocky points in this section that offer access for shore anglers (Titusville Rocks on the Jersey side and Fife & Drum Rocks on the Pennsy side).

You will notice that much of the shoreline is private adjacent to Route 32, and farther upriver the Delaware Canal crosses the highway and is between you and the river.

Once you reach New Hope, you find the largest concentration of shad fishermen on this lower section of the river before it starts to yaw to the west toward Lumberville.

The prominent structures in this stretch are the wing dam below New Hope and the bridge itself. Shore fishing is limited from the west bank, and a once popular spot housing an old factory is now a pricey condo complex.

Pennsylvania anglers do what their cross-river counterparts do–launch from the Lambertville access just south of the bridge, or come up from the limited launch site at Fireman's Eddy across from the flea market site on Route 29.

There is reciprocal fishing for anglers fishing with a license from either state or either shore, and boat anglers have bank-to-bank reciprocity. Remember, however, that there is a six-fish limit here in Pennsylvania. That means Keystone State law would take a dim view of coming ashore here with more than that number. Saying you caught them in no-limit New Jersey won't wash. Same goes for Garden Staters fishing the Pennsylvania side–six is the deal, which is more than enough shad for anyone.

Perhaps the best advice for starting out for early shad is to get to the locations mentioned and watch what's going on. Sooner or later you will see shad being caught.

A final word on safety. Don't fear the river, but give it plenty of respect. There may be times when it's wise to put your plans on hold for another day. I grew up in Wilkes-Barre, so I have an attitude bordering on awe when it comes to the ways of a river.

If you play it smart, come March you could be catching shad while upriver anglers are still house-bound.

photo-Rick Methot

Early Spring SMALLMOUTHS

by Jeff Knapp



Good smallmouth streams are often direct tributaries to our major waterways--the Delaware, Susquehanna and the Ohio river watersheds.

The sun's warming effect on my shoulders made me forget that it was an early April day. The rest of me was already warm and snug inside chest waders as I slowly worked my minnow-imitating lure along the rocky bottom of a deep hole in Mahoning Creek. In the clear, early spring water I watched the perch-finished lure wiggle toward me. Just as I was about to lift the bait out of the water for the next cast, a huge smallmouth dashed behind it but missed. If I had been musky fishing, it would have been considered a "hot" follow.

Instead of slinking back into the depths from which it came, the bass swam about 10 yards away and took a position next to a good-sized rock. The water was only about two feet deep.

I cast the lure well beyond the rock. Silt kicked up as I slowly worked the lure across the rock, the top of which was only inches under the surface. As the lure cleared the rock, I think it actually bumped into the back of the big smallie. I expected the bass to sprint to the depths. In an split second, however, it turned and nailed the lure.

The fight was awkward. With not much line out, the bass thrashed in the shallows. Had it been summer, things might have been different. But this was April, and the water temperature was barely 40 degrees. The 21-incher soon tired and I netted him.

Today that bass sits on my living room wall, a testament to a brand of angling I cut my teeth on–stream smallmouth fishing. It's been the only stream smallie I can remember killing.

For about a 10-year period, bass season was open year-round on Pennsylvania's flowing waters. During that time I discovered that early spring was the time to catch really big stream smallmouths. Before that, most of my attention directed at these fish was during the summer, when plenty of foot-long guys show up, but few fish over 16 inches seem to be around.

Though the closed season has been reinstituted, the chance for a trophy stream bronzeback is still possible the first few weeks of April, the time just before the close of

Early Spring SMALLMOUTHS



photo-Jeff Knapp

bass season. My records indicate that the best fishing for big fish was during April. Once into May, rock bass jumped all over our lures, but smallies were hard to come by.

A couple of reasons were behind ending the open season on bass in rivers and streams. It wasn't so much a factor of overharvest by anglers–this is something difficult to measure. Rivers and streams can provide hostile spawning environments, because they often fluctuate drastically during the springtime. Thus, it's tough to tell if tailing off of bass is caused by angler harvest or simply because of poor spawning conditions a few years back. Because of this nature, the Commission uses additional sources to help formulate its management plan for river and stream smallmouths.

According to Dick Snyder, Chief of the Commission Fisheries Management Division, public input has a lot to do with how the Commission manages this smallmouth bass population.

"It appears, and rightfully so, that our anglers want us to be more conservative with bass," says Snyder. This was derived, in part, from a smallmouth bass survey conducted a few years back in *Pennsylvania Angler*.

The reinstatement of the mid-April season closure of bass in streams and rivers came at a time when the minimum size for river bass jumped from 10 to 12 inches. Another part of the rationale for bringing back the season on rivers was for the sake of continuity with the regulations on black bass in lakes. Now a 12-inch minimum size applies to bass in both lakes and rivers, as does the two-month period from mid-April to mid-June when bass season is closed.

All this means that while the chance at big smallmouths may be shorter now, there is still opportunity. So let's get on with it.

Smallmouth streams

I love smallmouth bass fishing on large rivers like the Allegheny, Susquehanna and Ohio, but not at this time of year. The key to early spring smallmouth fishing is quickly warming waters. A warm snap can raise water temperatures 15 degrees in a few days, and smaller waters warm quicker than big ones.

The streams I fish most often can be characterized as both wadable and flotable, particularly in the springtime. At summer levels, a canoe would have to be dragged significant distances. Pools with depths of three to six feet are connected by gentle riffles and runs. Stream composition includes plenty of rocks. Long, deep, soft-bottomed pools are also a factor. Good smallmouth streams are often direct tributaries to our major waterways–the Delaware, Susquehanna and the Ohio river watersheds.

In describing the make-up of a productive smallmouth stream, I mentioned large, soft-bottomed pools. This isn't what most fishermen visualize when the topic of smallmouth water comes up. Instead, they think of runs broken by boulders, or perhaps the head or tail of a rock-lined hole. I think of this also, but more so in summer.

Though the closed season has been reinstituted, the chance for a trophy stream bronzeback is still possible the first few weeks of April, the time just before the close of bass season.

In early spring, big bass look for an easy meal without expending much in the way of energy. These deep, slow-moving holes fit the bill.

An experience of a few years ago illustrates this point. It was early April, again on Mahoning Creek. A deep, quarter-mile-long section of what's known locally as the "musky hole" lay before my partner Dave Keith and me. It looked like musky water, and more than one of the toothy critters had been extricated from the hole over the years.

I cast a perch-finished Fat Rap across the creek to the far bank. By quickly cranking it, the lure dived down to where it bounced bottom. I then slowed the retrieve, maintaining just enough speed to hold the contact with the bottom.

The first few casts brought nothing more than a wad of dead leaves. I steadily worked my way up the pool. The next cast also found the bottom. But instead of hauling in the previous year's dead foliage, a 3 1/2-pound smallmouth grabbed it, a fish that would stretch the tape to 20 inches before I released it.



Lures, tactics

Crankbaits are an important part of the early spring smallmouth arsenal. I break lures down into two groups: Ones that touch things and ones that don't.

It's a well-accepted notion that bass can be triggered to hit out of reflex, in addition to the feeding impulse. Bouncing a lure off an object seems to instill an attack response from the fish. In this instance, contact can be as subtle as nicking the lip of a plug enough to kick up some occasional bottom silt, or slowly deflecting the lure off rocks or boulders.

Short, squat, deep-diving cranks are best for working the deeper holes, such as the "musky hole" I mentioned. The lures needn't have an extra-long lip common on baits designed to reach depths greater than 10 feet. Deep is relative, and in this situation, at least on the waters I fish, we're talking about the 5-foot range.

The best I've found for this situation has been Rapala's deep Fat Rap in the two-inch version. Perch or crawfish finishes, something with an orange belly, seem to work best.

Free-swimming lures–shallow runners that rarely make that triggering contact–also work well, particularly in shallower water. I suppose smallies that are holding in the shallows may be feeding, and it isn't necessary to "trigger" them.

The no. 11 and 13 floating Rapalas have taken a lot of fish for me in the shallow water scenario, so I rarely use anything else. Try perch, gold, and blue/silver finishes. The addition of a splitshot or two can help tailor the running depth of the lure to your needs.

I've also had some success with in-line spinners such as a Rooster Tail and Mepps. The no. 2 size is about right.

All of these lures portray their action even at slow retrieve speeds. That's the retrieve speed that's going to catch fish most days. Keep the lure moving steadily, nothing jerky or fancy.

My partners and I normally use either a wading or float-trip approach. When wading, we pick out about two miles of choice stream, leaving a vehicle at both the upstream and downstream locations. We normally start from the downstream spot, working our way up the creek. The upstream approach allows us to sneak up on fish from a less conspicuous direction. We often bypass hundreds of yards of "dead water"–featureless sections of stream–so we can thoroughly work the high-percentage areas. Fish are more bunched up now than in the summer.

Day-long float trips are a method that allows keying in on an abundance of likely smallie locations. Because the best areas are often scattered, covering lots of water increases your odds.

Use a canoe as a vehicle, a means to get from spot to spot. Beach the canoe well upstream from water you want to work. Carefully and quietly work your way into your spot.

Trips of four to five miles let you have a shot at plenty of water, yet allow adequate time to fish each hole properly. The water will be dangerously cold, so always wear a personal flotation device.

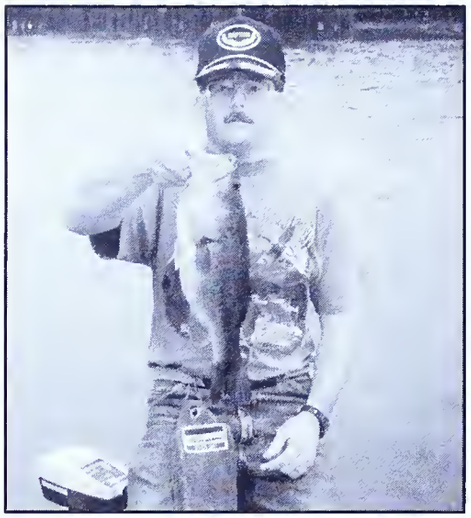
On a final note, keep in mind that many of the smallmouths you catch at this time of year are females a month or so away from spawning. They are much more valuable back in the water than in the freezer.

14 Early Spring Smallmouth Bass Hotspots

Many of the better waters for this kind of fishing are those you discover on your own. It may be the lower end of a trout stream, or a formerly polluted waterway nobody bothers to fish. Try these productive waterways. They are places to start your search, but by no means end it there.

1. Conewango Creek
2. Brokenstraw Creek
3. Tionesta Creek
4. French Creek
5. Redbank Creek
6. Youghiogheny River
7. Ten Mile Creek
8. Mahoning Creek
9. Sinnemahoning Creek, First Fork and Driftwood branches
10. Pine Creek
11. Penns Creek
12. Juniata River
13. Schuylkill River
14. Conestoga River

Cast and Caught



Kevin Ingram, of Philadelphia, caught and released this largemouth bass while fishing on a tributary of the tidal Delaware River. The fish weighed 4 1/2 pounds. Nice job, Kevin!



Allentown resident Paul D. Wint III earned a Senior Angler Award for this Susquehanna River smallmouth bass. The fish, caught on a jig/shiner combo, weighed 5 pounds, 4 ounces and was 21 1/2 inches long.



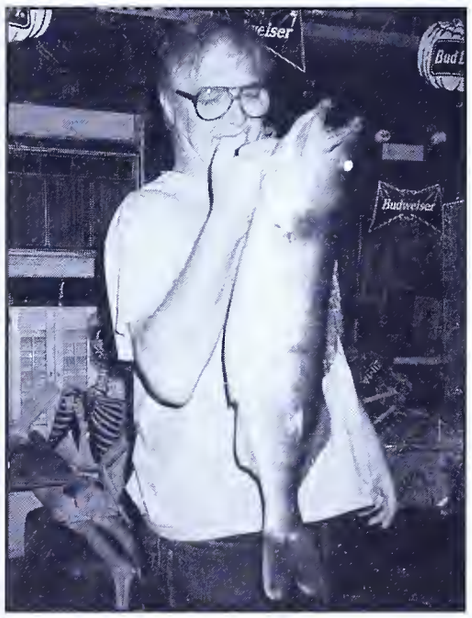
Ten-year-old Michael Mineo, of Bethel Park, hooked this crappie while fishing the Monongahela River near New Eagle. The fish weighed 1 1/2 pounds and was 14 inches long. Nice job, Michael!



Wally Greskiewicz, of Wyoming, PA, was fishing on Lake Winola when this brook trout attacked his lure. The fish measured 19 1/4 inches in length and weighed 3 pounds, 5 1/2 ounces.



William Hutchens, of Natrona Heights, was fishing in Elk Creek, Erie County, when he hooked this steelhead trout. The fish weighed 9 pounds, 3 ounces and was 27 1/8 inches long.



Bill Billingsley, of Meadville, used a shiner to convince this walleye to strike. The fish was 28 1/2 inches long and weighed 8 1/2 pounds.



Boyertown resident Dennis Slifer hooked this striped bass while fishing on Blue Marsh Lake last November. The fish weighed 10 pounds and measured 26 inches in length.



Nine-year-old angler James Scalise, of Bethel Park, was fishing on Lake Erie when this steelhead attacked his lure. The fish was 24 1/2 inches long and weighed 6 pounds, 11 ounces.



Kevin Young, of Moosic, used a minnow to entice this largemouth bass to strike. The 21-inch fish, caught out of White Deer Lake, Pike County, weighed 5 pounds, 10 ounces.

Cast and Caught



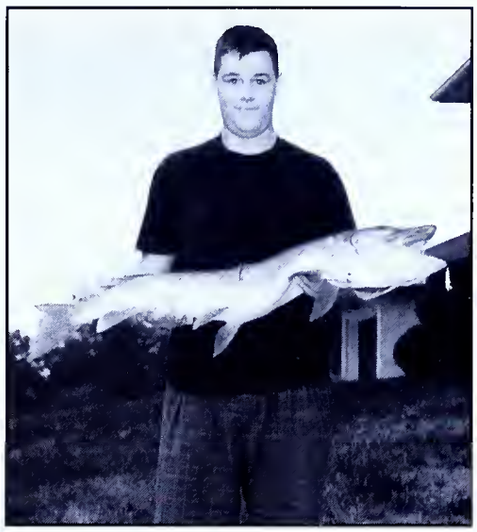
Elizabethtown resident William Wismer caught this nice brown trout on the opening day of the 1993 season. The fish, taken from Raccoon Creek, Perry County, measured 22 inches in length and weighed 5 pounds, 9 ounces.



Eleven-year-old Mindi Stouffer, of Middletown, earned a Junior Angler's Award for this nice rainbow trout. The Clarks Creek fish measured 21 1/2 inches in length and weighed 4 pounds, 9 ounces.



Pittsburgh resident Lou D'Ambrosio was fishing on the Allegheny River in Armstrong County when this walleye grabbed his lure. The fish weighed 10 pounds, 12 ounces and was 30 1/4 inches long.



Patrick Ford, of Middlesex, NJ, caught this muskellunge while fishing in the Susquehanna River last August. The 14-year-old angler caught the 45-inch, 22-pound fish on 4-pound-test line. Nice work, Pat!



Danny Scholl, age 3 1/2, proudly shows off his first legal-size large-mouth bass. The Blue Marsh Lake fish measured 15 1/2 inches and was quickly released unharmed. Great job, Danny!



Allentown resident Oscar Carle was fishing on Beltzville Lake, Carbon County, when he hooked this small-mouth bass. The fish measured 19 1/4 inches and weighed 4 pounds.



Lester Brown, of Rector, was fishing in Mill Creek, Westmoreland County, when this brown trout grabbed his minnow. The fish weighed 6 pounds, 2 ounces and was 23 1/2 inches long.



Marlin Gatty earned a Senior Angler Award for this walleye. The Allegheny River fish measured 33 inches in length and weighed 12 1/2 pounds.

Pennsylvania Rivers 2000 Conference

The Pennsylvania Rivers 2000 Conference, "Building Partnerships for River Conservation," will be held June 20-22 at the Harrisburg Hilton. Designed to set the agenda for river conservation into the next century, the conference will guide interested individuals in strategies and objectives. Featured will be discussions of how industry, business, agriculture and communities can work together for aquatic preservation. Case studies of successful partnerships will be examined and focus groups will explore other related ideas.

More than 50 regional, state and national experts in river conservation, water resources and the environment are scheduled to participate.

The event is principally hosted by the Department of Environmental Resources and the Department of Community Affairs, with the Fish and Boat Commission acting as one of numerous partners.

For more information about attending the Pennsylvania Rivers 2000 Conference, call (814) 234-4272.

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



The flash of a fish near the stream bottom often means that the trout are feeding on nymphs. The flash you see is the side of the fish as it turns to dislodge and capture the insects. Get well upstream of the fish and drift your fly along the bottom, making sure that the fly moves past the fish naturally without drag.

One of the more frustrating problems for the fly tier is getting head cement in the eye of the hook. The next time this happens to you, take a scrap feather and strip a few barbules from the butt end. Poke the stripped end of the stem into the eye of the hook and pull through. The remaining barbules of the feather easily clear the hook eye of cement.

Have you ever seen trout actually leap out of the water, seemingly chasing flies? Most often this activity signals that the trout are feeding on emerging insects, attempting to catch them before they reach the surface. Tie on an emerger pattern, such as a soft-hackle, and fish the fly just below the surface of the water.

Here's a trick for making very durable and flashy nymph bodies. Tie in a strand of copper wire ribbing at the rear of the hook shank, and form a dubbing loop with the wire. Lightly wax the wire and then lay your body dubbing material inside the loop, remembering that sparse is best. Twist the wire dubbing loop and you will create a length of "chenille." Wrap the body as usual. This technique is particularly effective when tying the Hare's Ear.

The Perfection Loop makes changing leaders simple. Tie a loop in the end of your fly line and secure with wraps of thread, whip finish and coat with a super glue like Zap-a-Gap. Tie a loop in the ends of your leaders so that they are ready in your vest when needed. Rigging a new leader is fast and easy while on the stream.

The next time you snag your fly, try throwing a roll cast directly at and over the snag. This often causes the fly to pop loose by letting the fly line pull the fly from the opposite side of the snag. Breaking your fly off should be the last resort.

Strike indicators can greatly aid the nymph fisherman in detecting strikes. Because it is necessary to keep the fly on or near the bottom while nymphing, setting the proper distance from the fly to the indicator is important. One rule of thumb is to set the indicator approximately 1 1/2 times the depth of the water.

Trout streams can be very crowded these days, especially at the beginning of the season. So observing proper stream etiquette can make the fishing more enjoyable for all. Remember to walk around other fishermen, staying well back from the bank so you don't spook fish, and try not to jump in front of other fishermen, only to fish water that they would soon reach.

illustration- Ted Walke

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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Anglers Currents

Commission Considers Adjustments to Special Regulation Waters, Extending Season on Lakes

The Commission is proposing sweeping changes to some regulations governing trout fishing, including the reclassification of some specially designated waters into two new programs.

The proposals, which would be implemented in 1995 if given final confirmation, received preliminary approval at the Commission's quarterly meeting January 24 in Harrisburg. The Commission now seeks public comment on the matter and will consider the changes for final vote on adoption in July.

"These proposals come in response to numerous and varied requests from Commonwealth anglers to simplify our special regulations yet provide diverse opportunities. We think these changes will benefit both anglers and the resource itself," said Richard A. Snyder, Chief of Division of Fisheries Management.

Among the actions considered is a plan to dissolve three current categories of special regulations and assign affected waters to other programs. Eliminated would be the current fly-fishing-only, no-harvest/flying-fishing-only and Limestone Springs Wild Trout Waters programs. Some streams currently regulated under those provisions would be redesignated into similar current programs such as catch-and-release and delayed-harvest/fly-fishing-only projects. Two new initiatives–the Heritage Trout Angling Program and the Selective Harvest Program–would absorb the remaining streams from those regulation categories that are dissolved.

"The Heritage Trout Angling Program," according to Snyder, "is intended to reflect the importance fly fishing has had in Commonwealth angling history by including key freestone and limestone waters long associated with fly fishing and wild trout management." Regulations for the program would include a barbless fly-fishing-only gear restriction, no closed season and a creel limit of zero.

The Selective Harvest Program is a suggested option designed to enhance wild trout fisheries while providing an opportunity for limited harvest of larger fish. The program also recognizes the difference in growth potential among trout species. Minimum size limits for this program are proposed at 12 inches for brown trout and nine inches for all other salmonids. Two trout may be creeled daily between opening day and the end of February on these waters. Artificial lures, including flies and streamers, would be permitted on waters in the Selective Harvest Program.

In other proposed changes, an adjustment to the delayed-harvest program is sought, beginning in 1995. To provide additional angling opportunities, the harvest period on these waters is suggested as June 15 through Labor Day. The proposal would encompass both delayed-harvest/ fly-fishing-only and delayed-harvest/artificial-lures-only programs, which presently allow harvest from June 15 through the end of February.

The adjustment, said Snyder, would allow a fall stocking of catchable trout. Also, the distribution of delayed-harvest areas across the Commonwealth would each autumn provide a mixture of urban fisheries and many streams in rural areas frequented by hunters and tourists.

The Commission also passed proposed rulemaking that would extend the trout fishing season on 44 stocked lakes, reservoirs and tailwaters. Under this proposal, the season on these waters would be extended until March 31. Additionally, a partial allocation of trout normally earmarked for preseason stocking would be released in impoundments during this extended season to provide more fishing days for sportsmen. Affected tailwaters would receive a similar late-winter stocking.

Both the impoundments and the tailwaters would be re-stocked during the closed period (April 1 to opening day) to maintain a traditional opening day.

The Commission is interested in reviewing public comment on the proposed regulations. Anyone with remarks or suggestions relating to these changes should write to: Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.–*Dan Tredinnick.*

Striper Anglers Sought for Survey

The Commission is looking for anglers to participate in a survey of striped bass fishing in the Delaware River and estuary. Results of the survey will help the effort to bolster striped bass populations and assist the Commission in reviewing current season and creel regulations.

"Restoration of East Coast striped bass stocks, including those in the Delaware River and estuary, is providing exciting fishing for Commonwealth anglers," says Dick Snyder, Chief of the Commission Division of Fisheries Management. "However, without conducting expensive angler use-and-harvest studies on our portion of the river and estuary, we don't know the extent of recreation provided and the degree of angler success. If we created a database of those anglers, though, we may be able to initiate relatively inexpensive studies, including telephone and mail questionnaires," Snyder says.

Anglers interested in assisting with this project should write to: Fish and Boat Commission, Fisheries Management Division, 450 Robinson Lane, Bellefonte, PA 16823.

DWCOs Lauded by Philadelphia Police

Two Commission Deputy Waterways Conservation Officers (DWCOs) have received commendations from the Philadelphia Police Department for their quick action following the assault of a city resident.

DWCO James H. Simon and DWCO Robert P. Ford were awarded the Philadelphia Police Department's Citizen Commendation at a ceremony at City Hall last January. The officers were honored as heroes for their part in detaining two juveniles accused of assaulting a 23-year-old woman and stealing her bicycle.

Simon and Ford were on patrol August 9, 1993, when they were approached by a woman on Wissahickon Drive. The woman had numerous cuts on her legs and her face was swollen. She told the officers that she had been beaten and robbed. After getting a description of the suspects and notifying Philadelphia Police, the DWCOs began searching for the assailants. With the aid of three other witnesses, Ford and Simon were able to track the suspects and detain them and an adult accomplice until police arrived.

On the Water

with Carl Richardson

Responsibility

Long after the parade of visitors and well-wishers was over, and the stream of flowers and cards stopped flowing, I began to feel a little out of sorts. I am told this happens to most, if not all, new fathers. Here I am, blessed with a healthy, beautiful little girl in my arms, feeling as if I am missing something.

Sitting up one hot June night, crying baby in my arms, it hit me–I knew what I was missing–fishing.

Early in our marriage, my work schedule and my wife's work schedule rarely coincided. Even though that was rough on our relationship, it left me plenty of time to fish. Got to take the good with the bad, right? In the spring and early summer it was trout. I made the usual pilgrimages following the big hatches. You know the bugs and the places. I found myself getting pretty good, too. Practice does make perfect.

During the summer I could be found on the Susquehanna or Juniata rivers, morning, noon and night. Going toe to toe with a smallmouth is addicting, you know. In the fall, I could just pick up and chase salmon or steelhead, or fish at night for walleyes on the Susquehanna.

Those outings made up a big part of my life then–to be a DINK (dual income, no kids) and spending most of my free time and money on fishing. What a life! Now here I am a short time later changing diapers and shopping for a stroller, with no going back.

With responsibility looking back at me with big blue eyes, a part of me felt those days long gone. The days on the water would be replaced with dancing lessons, soccer practice, piano lessons, Sunday school, doctors appointments, and more. The desire to be out there fishing was intense, but not to the point at which I would desert my wife and little girl–not yet, anyway.

That is when the guilt set in.

The feeling of guilt and selfishness can easily overpower you. Was I a terrible father because I wanted to go fishing? What kind of father leaves his wife with a crying two-month-old baby to go fishing? Not the kind of behavior a grown-up would exhibit. I guess I could no longer hide from this thing called being a "grownup." That's the point in your life when you realize you leave something behind that you can no longer do, a feeling you can no longer capture.

Was I a terrible father because I wanted to go fishing? What kind of father leaves his wife with a crying two-month-old baby to go fishing?

I told my friend Rich about my guilt feelings and with a chuckle he suggested that before I wrote myself off as a "father of the year" candidate, I take a good look at my situation. Sure, my time on the water would be limited for now, but I had the rest of my life to fish. And best of all, he reminded me that I would have a little girl to share the sport with. He also suggested that I look at other ways to get my fix. He claimed I didn't need to get out on the water to feel better. I just needed to spend some time, he said, my head filled only with fishing thoughts.

With his every Saturday morning visit that summer, we would dig into the catalogs, or plant ourselves in front of the TV with the VCR loaded with fishing videos. We would play show and tell, bringing the fishing gear out of the closet or the trunk of the car, discussing the pros and cons of each lure. His visits helped a lot, but I needed more.

I rigged a rod and practiced casting in the yard or the living room. Kelsy would sit in the swing, her little mind wondering what in the world daddy was doing. You see, even an infant knows you need water to fish.

During those evenings my wife worked, I broke out the fly tying stuff. While my little girl slept, I was whipping out deer hair bass bugs and terrestrials. I knew that it might be some time until they hit the water, but tying helped me get my fishing "fix."

I found that by spending an hour or so each day, just reading or thinking about fishing or going through the motions made me feel so much better. That one hour wasn't the same, but I did feel better. Soon the guilt was quickly replaced with anticipation–anticipation of the days I would spend on the water, with a deeper appreciation of every second and every fish–anticipation of those days spent along the water's edge showing Kelsy how to catch a fish. Anticipation of teaching her how to tie a half-hitch and how to make deer hair flare. The anticipation of sharing my love of water and the things that call it home.

Kelsy turned two last summer. On father's day, my dad, Kelsy and I went fishing at a nearby pond. Armed with fly rods and a box of poppers, we wanted to spend a leisurely evening catching slabs. On my second or third cast I managed to hook one. Kneeling down, I showed the fish to Kelsy, who looked with amazement at the fish. Her excitement was obvious, and so was mine. I thought even at this early age she was "hooked." I got a cold slap of reality, though, when with a squeal, she refused to touch it. Oh well, got to take the good with the bad. "'Nother one, daddy," she whispered.

SMART Angler's Notebook

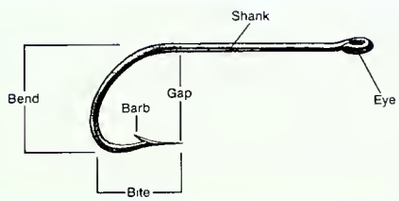
by Carl Richardson

HOOKS

With hundreds, maybe thousands of different kinds and sizes of hooks to choose from, nowhere is the idea of "the right tool for the right job" more important. The hook serves three purposes–to hold and present bait, hook the fish, and more importantly to hold on to the fish until we can land it.

Choosing the right hook can mean the difference between success and frustration. To choose the right hook, you must know a little about hooks and how hooks differ. Equipped with that information, you can select the hook that best suits the way you are fishing, and the species you are after.

Let's look at fish hooks and three or four features of all hooks and the importance of each. Look for more on hooks when we get to artificial lures and baits.





SINGLE HOOK: ONE POINT, USED FOR BAITFISHING, LURES SUCH AS JIGS OR FLIES, AND FISHING PLASTIC WORMS AND GRUBS.



DOUBLE HOOK: TWO POINTS, USED ON LURES (PLUGS, SPOONS) OR LIVE BAIT (MINNOWS).



TREBLE HOOK: THREE POINTS, USED MOSTLY ON LURES (PLUGS, SPOONS) BUT IS ALSO USED WHEN FISHING WITH SOFT, NATURAL BAITS SUCH AS DOUGHBALLS, CHICKEN LIVERS AND RIGGED MINNNOWS.

To make it easier to unhook and release a fish, some anglers mash the barb down on their hooks. But this may result in losing fish that are poorly hooked.

The hook size is a measure of the distance from the point of the hook to the shank, the gap.

The wire that hooks are made of is described as either fine (narrow), standard or heavy.

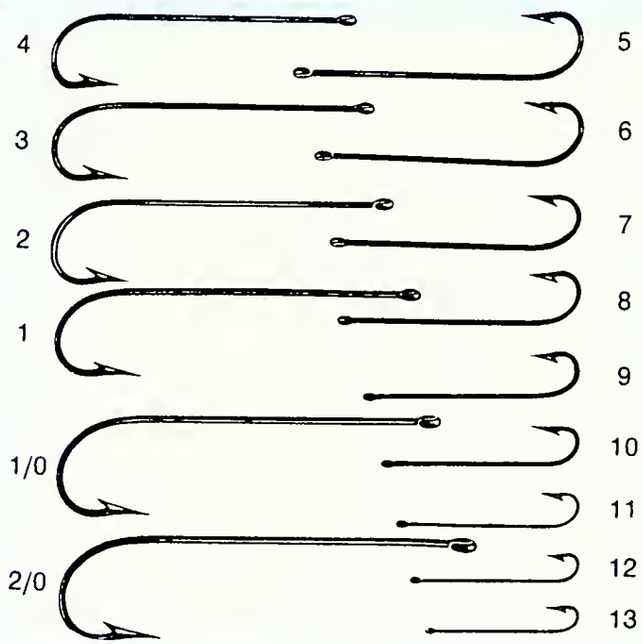
Fine-wire hooks are used for spooky fish or small fish. Heavy hooks are for fish that have tough mouths like catfish and muskies, or for large fish that would straighten a standard hook.

Hook shanks are either short, like this hook for fishing salmon eggs for trout, or long, like this Carlisle style hook for panfish. Long-shank hooks are easier to get out of the mouth of small fish. Short shanks are best when the fish are spooky and might see the hook.

One kind of hook, the baitholder, has small barbs on the shank. These barbs help hold the bait on the hook.

HOOK CHART

WHEN SELECTING A HOOK FOR LIVE BAIT FISHING, USE THIS CHART AS A GUIDE. CARRY A SELECTION OF HOOKS IN DIFFERENT SIZES AND STYLES. LET THE FISH YOU ARE AFTER AND THE BAIT YOU ARE USING BE YOUR GUIDE.



If all the fish you catch seem to swallow the hook, increase the size of the hook you are using and try to set the hook sooner.

If fish seem to be taking your bait but you are not hooking them, check the hook point. Make sure it is sharp and straight and make sure the hook is not too big or small.

Panfish (bluegills, crappies, perch): Long-shank, fine-wire hooks, Carlisle or baitholder hooks in sizes 12 to 6.

Trout: When fishing with worms, grubs or eggs–short-shank, fine-wire hooks in size 14 to 8.
When using minnows, double or treble hooks in sizes 10 to 6.

Smallmouth bass: Standard baitholder hooks in sizes 6 to 3/0.

Largemouth bass: Standard baitholder or heavy wire hooks in sizes 4 to 3/0.

Catfish: Standard baitholder or heavy wire in sizes 10 and up.

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Straight Talk

Working Together to Focus on the Future



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Acting Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

This past January, sportsmen and conservationists representing the angling and boating public met as a "Roundtable for Pennsylvania Sportsmen" and discussed the future direction of your Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Seventy-two guests with diversified backgrounds from 25 counties shared their views and expertise with 42 staff members. Four important issues were considered. Participants focused on their ideas on how the Commission and the public should work together to: 1) provide boating opportunities, 2) provide fishing opportunities, 3) protect and manage aquatic resources, and 4) identify ways to obtain public input into the Commission's planning efforts.

For an entire afternoon a friendly but inquisitive dialogue addressed the Commission's future direction. At times discussions became heated, but a sincere attitude of "how we can do things better" prevailed. As the session progressed, it became obvious that the Commission needs to continue to reach out to the non-traditional public to obtain a broader perspective and develop a closer working relationship in providing service to the public. Overall feedback from the participants was positive and included specific suggestions for consideration in future gatherings of this kind.

Suggestions for providing boating opportunities concentrated on three general areas. One area frequently cited was to improve and upgrade boat launch, parking and mooring sites. Quality of a particular access site was more important than quantity of accesses. Establishing priorities of work and allocation of resources was considered essential in developing new and repairing old accesses. The idea of entering into cooperative partnership agreements with private and public landowners was emphasized. A second area cited was establishing more effective communications and providing timely information about boating opportunities. Many comments focused on regional dissemination of news and publicizing opportunities. The last area of importance was the need to increase the number of boater education courses, coupled with the thought of making operator education and licensing mandatory.

Fishing opportunity suggestions ranged from more aggressive fisheries management, especially in warmwater and coolwater resource areas, to expanding opportunities through various regulation changes and incorporating new initiatives. Additional suggestions included more outreach efforts and partnerships to offer fishing and environmental education programs and expand general awareness of what is currently available. Closer and more supportive efforts of the cooperative nursery program were also cited.

Resource protection and management suggestions focused on expanding the Commission's involvement with local governments, and private and public interest groups. Suggestions included involving a larger variety of people in management, education, protection and improvement of aquatic resources. Water quality and quantity was addressed as a concern. The Commission needs to involve a larger group of citizens in promoting its motto of "Resource First--Protect, Conserve and Enhance." A greater Commission commitment to hold meaningful public involvement sessions throughout the Commonwealth and to be more active in surveying user needs is a means to do so.

Lastly, suggestions regarding public involvement and input into the agency's comprehensive planning effort resulted in a desire to hold regional meetings, workshops and information sessions and conducting public surveys to address future efforts. Emphasis was placed on the use of multi-media to get the word out to the public. Regional dissemination of information was highly supported.

Considering all these ideas, the question is, where do we go from here? The Commission is totally aware and dedicated to the idea that public input and involvement is instrumental in successfully establishing the future direction of the agency. Therefore, consideration is under way to conduct regional meetings to receive additional public input regarding the Commission's future direction. Announcements concerning locations and dates of these gatherings will be forthcoming. Your participation in this most worthwhile venture is encouraged and needed.

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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

Tactics for Opening Day *by Charles R. Meck*
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This issue's front cover shows Pennsylvania's 1994 trout/salmon stamp, painted by Pennsylvania artist Robert Clement Kray.

A little goes a long way

Do you think that raising children these days is tougher for you than it was for your parents or grandparents? I recently talked with parents who are frustrated and angry because they believe that the values they are trying to teach their children are increasingly more difficult to reinforce.

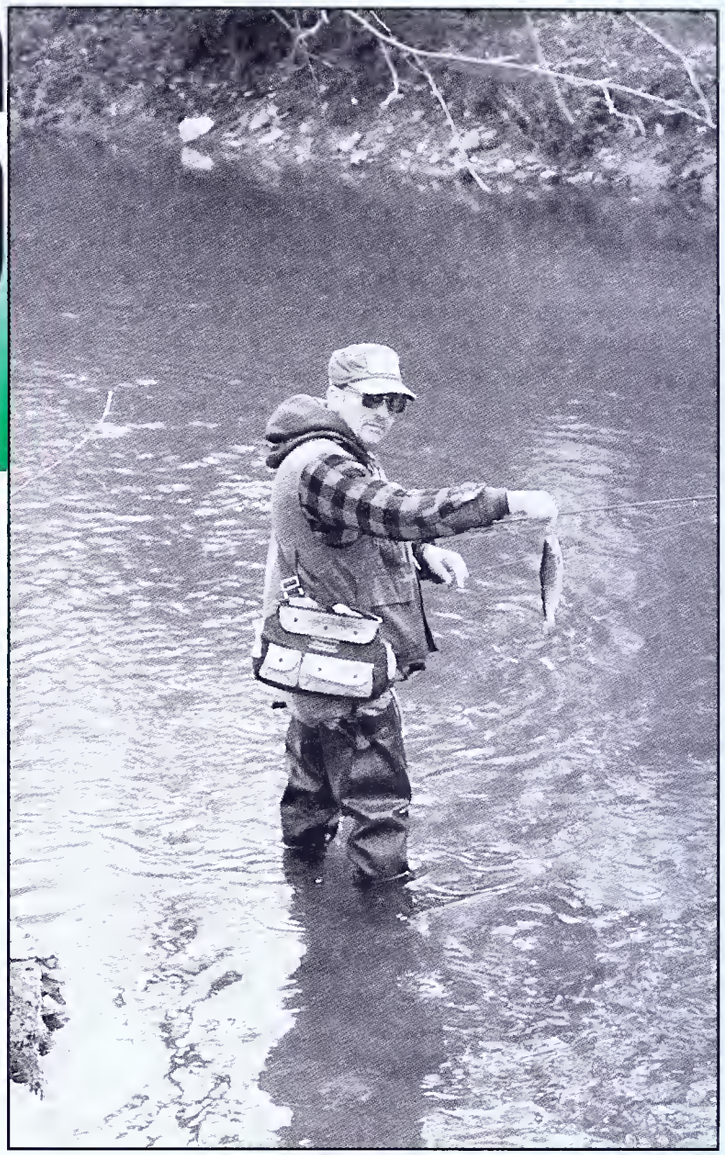
On the other hand, I've received letters from *Angler* readers and I've talked to anglers who say things like, "my son and I enjoy fishing and your magazine," or "our whole family loves to fish and read the *Angler*," or "the kids enjoy fishing and the *Angler* as much as I do."

So as I prepared this issue, I pictured families fishing–parents with children, and grandparents with grandchildren, even though this idea isn't the focus of the material. I realized that influencing our children is like using garlic in cooking: A little goes a long way. I vowed to continue to take my own children fishing this season–if I didn't, the kids would think that *not* going fishing is unusual. They're already hooked. And that value certainly hasn't been difficult to encourage.

At this traditional beginning of the fishing season, let's just keep teaching the young–and others new to fishing–about catching and releasing fish, about keeping fish, about camaraderie, and about environmental awareness. Remember stick-to-itive-ness and patience. And let's remember that a little really does go a long way.–*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*

TACTICS *for Opening Day*

by Charles R. Meck



Opening day 1994–what will it have in store for us? Will it be anything like the opening day of the 1993 season, April 17? What a beginning, last year's opening day. Bryan Meck, Ken Rictor and I planned to fly fish on Bald Eagle Creek near Unionville in Centre County. A few weeks before opening day the blizzard of the century clobbered the central part of the state. In late March and early April rain fell and fell–10 inches of it. The Bald Eagle went way over its bank the Friday night before opening day.

Even with the dismal outlook we agreed to continue our annual opening day tradition and fly fish Bald Eagle Creek. When we arrived at the stream I knew it was hopeless–the stream seemed at least three feet above normal and still filled many farmers' fields bordering the stream. I looked in several puddles now shut off from the stream and saw trout in these isolated pools–trout that attempted to stay out of the flood waters. Bryan, Ken and I hiked downstream for a mile and saw several small pools in a farmer's field that now held trout. In those floodwaters Bryan Meck caught the only trout of the day–in a slow eddy next to shore. An hour later we left the stream, lacking many of the pleasant opening day memories stuffed away and rechewed occasionally.

By the next day the stream level had dropped almost a foot and I returned to the same spot. Now more trout showed up in isolated puddles in the field. I tied on a pattern that has become an opening day tradition, a heavily weighted Green Weenie. By the time the morning had ended, that size 10 Weenie had helped me land a dozen trout–in waters that still flowed two feet above normal and that just the day before surrendered no trout.

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Back in 1988 several of us experienced a completely different kind of opening day. I planned to fish the Lackawaxen River in northeastern Pennsylvania with Lee Eckert, John Churnetski and Carl Laurer. Each year Jerry Lewis hosts these opening day anglers at his Rowland home. While traveling to the river early opening day morning, a freak 2-inch snowstorm greeted us. As Lee and John continued to fly fish in the morning, several heavy snow squalls filled the leaden skies with huge flakes. Snow continued to fall intermittently until noon. By the time we quit for the lunch hour for a traditional first day turkey dinner hosted by Jerry Lewis, the gray clouds disappeared and a bright-blue sky replaced them. At dinner all of us complained about the terrible, inclement weather and our inability to catch trout.

We continued our fishing after our noon meal. Shortly after we arrived back on the Lackawaxen for our afternoon excursion, we began to see a few hendricksons appear. Within a half-hour thousands of hendricksons floated on the river in front of us. A few of the recently planted trout began feeding on the surface on this new food. Some frustrated anglers cast spinners over the rising trout in an attempt to catch them. Cold water temperatures supported my convictions that few trout would take dry flies. The four of us caught only a few trout on dry flies that opening day, but the hendrickson hatch saved the day.

Or is this more typical of your opening day? You arrive at the stream shortly before the season begins, looking for a place

Early in the season trout seem to hit in spurts. You might go for an hour or two without any strikes and then have a half-dozen in a short period. Don't quit too soon.

with room enough to cast. You note that the stream is clear but a foot or two above normal. You plunge your thermometer into the cold water and get a reading of 44 degrees. You see no mayflies, stoneflies or caddisflies–it's too cold for any to emerge. The opening time arrives and dozens of anglers around you toss in spinners, salmon eggs, worms, minnows, cheese and marshmallows. If you use flies, what chance do you have of catching trout in these less than ideal conditions? How can you compete with anglers using a myriad of baits? To succeed you have to think of tactics, strategies and patterns that work in opening day settings.

Tactics

The last example typifies the most common kind of opening day you'll experience. You'll usually see water temperatures around 40 to 45; water level about one to two feet above normal; few, if any, insects on the water; and you're flanked by a large number of anglers on both sides of you. The things I remember most about opening day include high water, cold temperatures and crowds–these often make up part of the challenge of early season fly fishing. Let's look at some strategies you might use in these less than ideal early spring conditions.

1. Get the pattern on or near the bottom. When the water temperature stays below 50 degrees, trout most often stay on or near the bottom. Add weight to the pattern and fish it deep. Sure, you're going to lose some flies if you fish on the bottom.

You can add weight in several ways. I most often add weight to the body of the fly when I'm tying it. I use .015 or .020 lead wire and wrap it around the hook shank. I color code patterns with different colored thread on the head of the fly to distinguish how much weight I have added.

If you add lead shot, place it approximately 6 to 12 inches above the pattern. I dislike casting patterns with lead shot, so add weight to the leader as a last resort.

Use a sinking tip fly line. This line gets your pattern down to the trout quickly. I often use a sinking tip fly line opening day with a 6-foot leader.

2. Vary your retrieve. Don Bastian guides and teaches fly fishing to many Pennsylvania anglers. He teaches all anglers he guides to vary the retrieve. Cast the pattern almost directly upstream and let the fly drift downstream, stripping the line as the fly drifts downstream. Cast the pattern across and slightly upstream. On some of the casts let the fly drift naturally–on others twitch the fly. See which method seems to work best on opening day.

3. Often a slow, deep retrieve works best in cold water. Remember that in cold water the trout's metabolism has also slowed. When water temperatures range in the high 30s or low 40s, trout often react slowly. So in addition to getting the pattern where the trout are, it's important to move it slowly.

4. Change patterns. If one fly doesn't work, use another. We'll look at some of the patterns that have worked well for me over the years. If you feel comfortable using a dropper, then you can use two patterns and increase your chances of success.

5. Don't give up too soon. On many early season excursions I've been surrounded by dozens of anglers for the first hour or two only to find the stream almost void of anglers by noon. Early in the season trout seem to hit in spurts. You might go for an hour or two without any strikes and then have a half-dozen in a short period. Don't quit too soon. The water temperature might rise and angler commotion might die down, and trout might respond by feeding. I've often seen streams come alive with action after many of the anglers have left.

6. If you encounter muddy conditions, try a brightly colored pattern like the Mickey Finn. I often resort to more brightly colored patterns in off-color water.

Patterns

In the April 1991 *Pennsylvania Angler* I wrote an article called "Muddlers, Buggers, Weenies and Ghosts." I extolled the virtues of using Muddler Minnows, Woolly Buggers, Green Weenies and Gray Ghosts as opening day selections destined to catch trout. To that list I have since added a Bead Head Pheasant Tail Nymph and the Woven Stonefly Nymph as great early season selections. Let's look at a few of the patterns.

• **Green Weenie.** For the first week of the trout fishing season in 1992, I used this pattern exclusively. On all occasions I fished the pattern on the bottom. If you use this pattern consistently, you'll find that it out-fishes most others you'll use throughout the year.



You'll be surprised how many large trout take the Green Weenie.

TACTICS
for Opening Day

I landed one 24-inch rainbow on the pattern the first week of the 1993 season. Make certain you carry plenty of these with you. This could be the most effective pattern you use on opening day.

The Green Weenie continues to produce trout throughout the season. I've found it especially effective in April and also from July through October.

I add a loop to the tail of the pattern made of chartreuse chenille. This loop makes the Green Weenie wiggle as it moves downstream.

• **Woolly Bugger.** The Woolly Bugger is an old standby that I rely on heavily in the spring and fall. I prefer this pattern tied with a dark-olive or black body. Lots of anglers wonder why this pattern works so well. If you take a close look at almost any stream in the Commonwealth, you find many fish fly larvae. Look at a fish fly larva and see how much it resembles a Woolly Bugger.

I can remember an opening day almost a decade ago. I saw hundreds of fish fly larvae that had been displaced by flood waters now floating down the Bald Eagle. That day I used a Woolly Bugger exclusively and had an unbelievable starter to the trout season.

Don Bastian also ties Woolly Buggers with orange and green bodies and has had great success with these colors.

• **Bead Head Pheasant Nymph.** Walt Young first introduced this pattern to me. Don't go on any fishing trip without this bead head, especially in spring and fall. In a period of two weeks on the lower Bald Eagle, I caught two 16-inch, two 19-inch and one 23-inch brown trout. As with all of the early season patterns, fish it slow and deep.

• **Woven Stonefly Nymph.** Gregory Hoover, a noted entomologist and writer, prefers this pattern over any other in April. Several years ago on opening day, Gregory caught a 5-pound brook trout on Loyalsock Creek on the Woven Stonefly Nymph. This pattern includes some heavy lead on either side of the hook shank, which gets the fly to the bottom quickly.

Opening day hatches

Even with crowded conditions and cold water temperatures, you might see a hatch on some of Pennsylvania's finest waters. Most hatches in mid-April appear from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you want to see hatches on opening day, hit narrow sections of Fishing Creek in Clinton County. On the trophy trout section of this stream I've already witnessed five hatches on the same day in mid-April. On any April day you might see mayflies like the little blue-winged olive duns, quill gordon, blue quill, hendrickson and a caddisfly, the grannom.

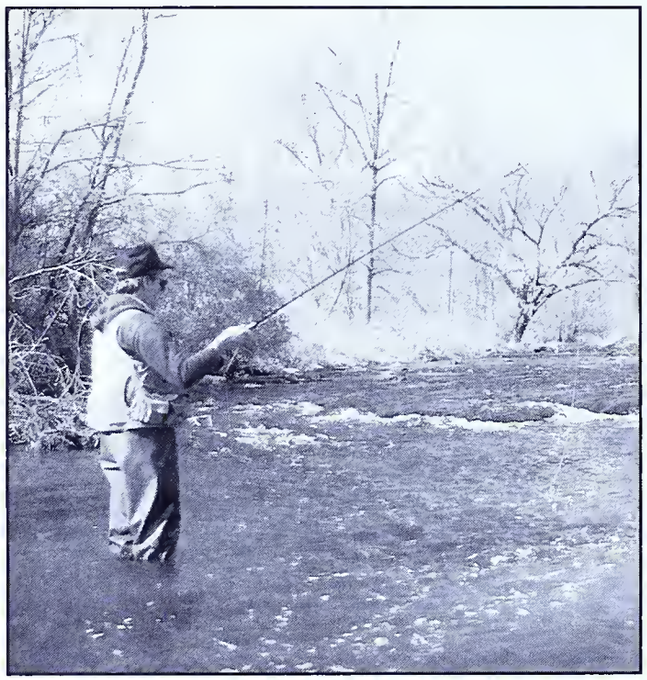
You can also see plenty of hatches on many northcentral freestone streams. Loyalsock and Kettle creeks can also sport hendricksons and blue quills on opening day. Here are some of the more common hatches you might see on opening day.

• **Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun.** This small mayfly can appear as early as early March. Hatches on many streams are well under way when the season opens. A size 18 Hare's Ear copies the nymph. Hatches appear on the Little Juniata River, Spring, Fishing, Bald Eagle (below Milesburg), Bushkill and Little Pine creeks.

• **Blue Quill.** I've seen great opening day hatches of blue quills on Cedar Run and Fishing Creek just upstream from Lamar. Most of the northcentral freestone streams like Kettle, Loyalsock and First Fork hold good hatches. The Bald Eagle near Tyrone has a first class hatch of blue quills. One of the most spectacular blue quill emergences occurs on Oil Creek shortly after the season begins.

• **Hendrickson.** One of the most common hatches in the state, the hendrickson appears in good numbers on the Lehigh, Lackawaxen and Delaware rivers in the northeast. The hendrickson emerges in early April on Codorus Creek near Hanover, York County.

• **Quill Gordon.** The quill gordon is the largest early mayfly to appear. You'll find this hatch on opening day on some of our better northcentral streams. The Loyalsock above Williamsport holds a good first week hatch as do Slate and Cedar runs. A wet fly copying the emerging dun works well.



How can you compete with anglers using a myriad of baits? To succeed you have to think of tactics, strategies and patterns that work in opening day settings.

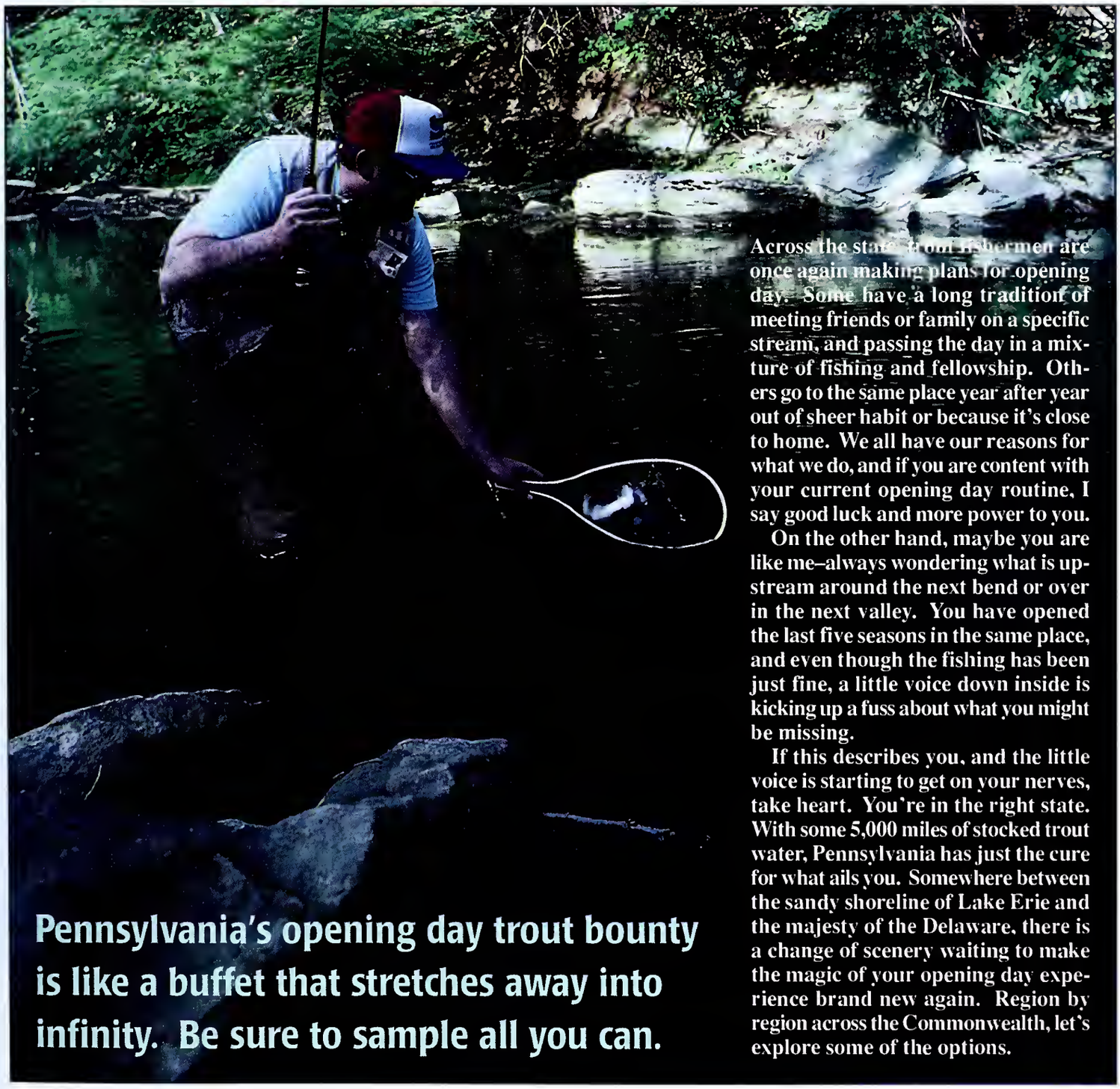
• **Grannom.** The grannom appears on many limestone streams on opening day. Spruce Creek, the Little Juniata River and Penns Creek have hatches of this downwing caddisfly near opening day.

Some streams also hold early season stonefly hatches like the early brown stonefly and little black stonefly. Often the latter stonefly hatch has begun in mid-March. Ridley Creek in the southeast and Oil Creek in the northwest boast great little black stonefly hatches.

Do you have a ritual to start off the trout season? Even though conditions are less than acceptable, do you still plan to fly fish? Then follow some simple rules like keeping the pattern deep and retrieve it slowly. Along with these simple rules, try some of the patterns I've recommended. Even though it's opening day, be on the lookout for hatches. And above all, enjoy the experience–it's opening day and you have a whole season of fly fishing ahead of you.

OPENING DAY GEMS

by Robert L. Petri



Pennsylvania's opening day trout bounty is like a buffet that stretches away into infinity. Be sure to sample all you can.

Across the state, trout fishermen are once again making plans for opening day. Some have a long tradition of meeting friends or family on a specific stream, and passing the day in a mixture of fishing and fellowship. Others go to the same place year after year out of sheer habit or because it's close to home. We all have our reasons for what we do, and if you are content with your current opening day routine, I say good luck and more power to you.

On the other hand, maybe you are like me–always wondering what is upstream around the next bend or over in the next valley. You have opened the last five seasons in the same place, and even though the fishing has been just fine, a little voice down inside is kicking up a fuss about what you might be missing.

If this describes you, and the little voice is starting to get on your nerves, take heart. You're in the right state. With some 5,000 miles of stocked trout water, Pennsylvania has just the cure for what ails you. Somewhere between the sandy shoreline of Lake Erie and the majesty of the Delaware, there is a change of scenery waiting to make the magic of your opening day experience brand new again. Region by region across the Commonwealth, let's explore some of the options.

OPENING DAY GEMS

Southeast

Southeastern Pennsylvania boasts a good number of choices for the angler planning to spend opening day in this history-rich portion of the state.

Tulpehocken Creek. Best known for its special reg area below Blue Marsh Dam near Reading, the upper sections of this Berks County limestoner have been less publicized and can offer an excellent opening day experience.

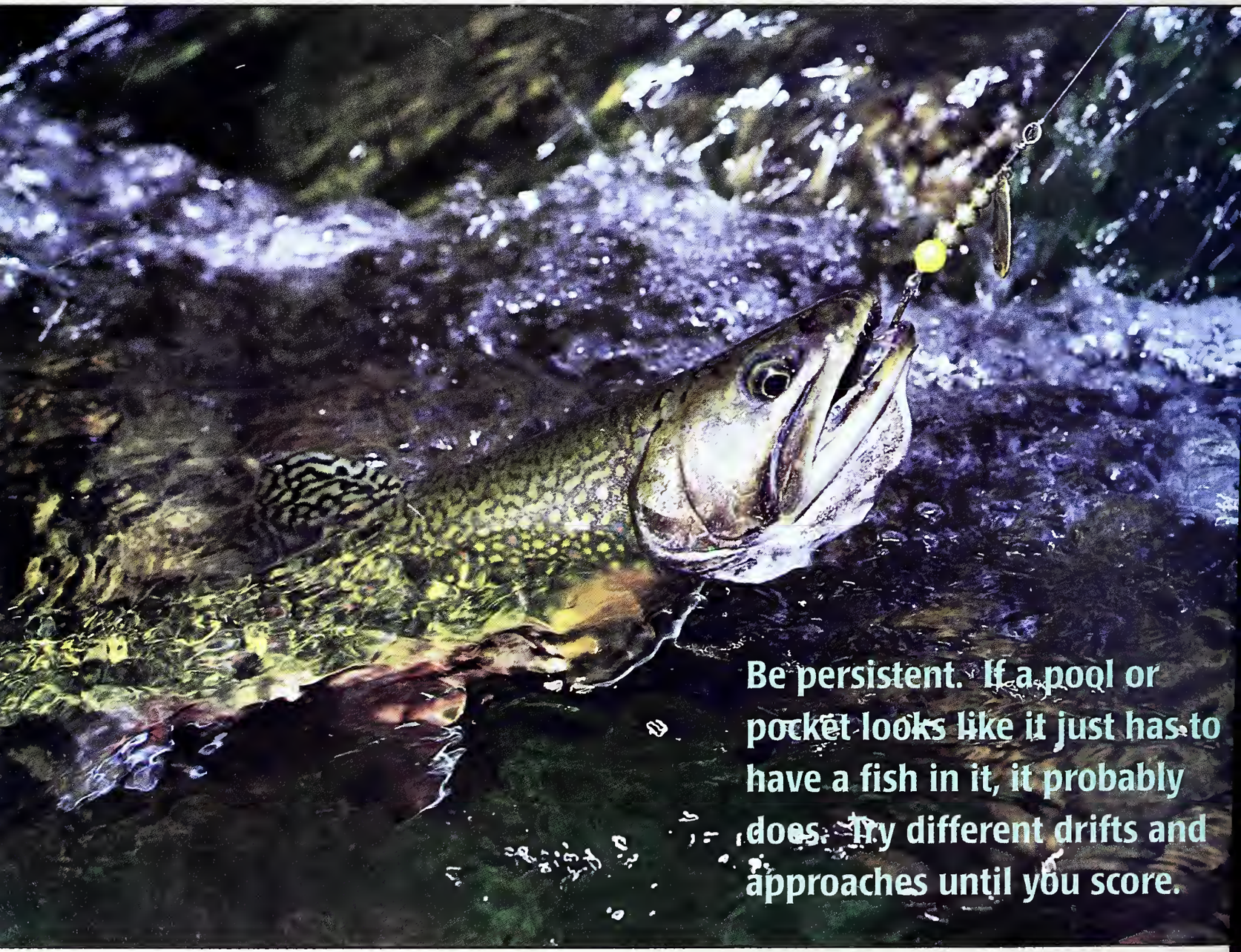
Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann has responsibility for the lower Delaware River watershed, which includes the Tulpehocken. He rates the stream as a good bet for opening day because of heavy preseason stocking of brown trout and rainbow trout. The 12-mile length of this section helps spread out the crowds, according to Kauffman.

The upper Tulpehocken winds through west-central Berks County. Several state routes that branch off of U.S. Route 422 from Myersdale in Lebanon County downstream beyond Womelsdorf in Berks County provide the best stream access points. The "Tully" flows for the most part through private lands that are open to fishing. Visiting anglers can help keep the stream open by exercising good manners on the water.

West Branch, Octoraro Creek. The beautiful rushing waters of the West Branch of the Octoraro were also high on Mike Kauffman's list of opening day possibilities. Flowing through an open valley in southern Lancaster County, the West Branch enjoys designation under the state Scenic Rivers program. Stocked preseason with brown trout and rainbow trout, the West Branch is a very popular opening day destination over its seven miles of open water. The best access to the West Branch of the Octoraro is via Route 472 south out of Quarryville.

Skippack Creek. Seven miles of this gently flowing Montgomery County stream within the confines of Evansburg State Park are stocked with brown trout and rainbow trout before opening day. The park provides a recreational and angling oasis in the middle of densely populated Montgomery County.

U.S. Route 422 east of Collegeville bisects the state park section



of Skippack Creek at Evansburg and provides the primary points of stream access. Additionally, throughout Evansburg Park, numerous roads parallel or come near the stream to provide access. Above the park, State Route 73 leads to an additional two miles of stocked water.

Northeast

Commission Area 4 Fisheries Manager Robert Moase is responsible for monitoring the streams of the upper Susquehanna watershed in northeast Pennsylvania. He recommends the following pair of trout waters to anglers looking for a new place to spend the season opener.

Schrader Creek. Thought by many to be the best trout stream in Bradford County, Schrader Creek flows through the wild setting of State Game Lands 12 and 36 in the southern portion of the county. Ten miles of the stream in the game lands are stocked preseason with brook trout and brown trout.

Schrader Creek can offer excellent, uncrowded opening day fishing to the angler willing to take the time to hike in. The game lands portion of the stream is paralleled by an access road that is gated at both ends. Motorized vehicles are not permitted beyond these gates.



Photo-Mark A. Nale

Access to the upstream game lands gate on Schrader Creek is via Route 154 south out of Canton. The lower gated parking area is best reached by taking State Route 3006 off of Route 414 near Franklindale. To explore the best that Schrader Creek has to offer, pack a lunch and plan to spend the day in the remote walk-in section of the stream.

Starrucca Creek. This medium-sized freestoner tucked away in a remote corner of northeast Susquehanna County may actually be a stream that doesn't see enough angler pressure, according to Area 4 Fisheries Manager Bob Moase. He notes that recent inseason surveys of Starrucca Creek have turned up higher-than-expected numbers of stocked trout left over from preseason stockings.

Starrucca Creek flows over a rocky, boulder-strewn bed throughout its slightly more than five miles of stocked water. All three species of trout are stocked here before opening day.

Starrucca Creek is best reached by taking Route 171 to the village of Lanesboro. Here a huge stone railroad viaduct spans the stream near the point where it enters the Susquehanna River. From Lanesboro upstream, Township Road 296 (Viaduct Street) parallels the Starrucca, and offers numerous points of access.

Jordan Creek. This Lehigh County limestone stream was recommended by Commission Area 5 Fisheries Manager Dave Arnold as a good opening day selection for anglers looking to try someplace different.

Jordan Creek features two distinct sections within its 15 miles of stocked water. Both sections receive ample preseason plants of brown trout and rainbow trout. The upper section of the stream from the Route 100 bridge downstream to the vicinity of Kernville flows through a rural setting and the confines of State Game Lands 206. Route 309 north out of Kernville provides access to this portion of the stream.

The lower section of Jordan Creek from Kernville downstream to the mouth in Allentown loses its rural feel as it flows through a heavily developed area. However, the opening day fishing here can still be very good. Access to this lower section of Jordan Creek is via Main Boulevard off Route 309 near the town of Guthville.

Southcentral

Southcentral Pennsylvania is blessed with some of the finest trout water our state has to offer. Here are just a few of the options available to the opening day angler.

East Licking Creek. This southcentral freestone stream offers approximately 20 miles of stocked trout water on its journey through Mifflin and Juniata counties. The stream has two distinct sections, each with its own particular opening day appeal.

The 10 miles of stocked water from the headwaters in the Tuscarora State Forest downstream to Clearview Reservoir is small, classic mountain trout water. Brown trout and brook trout are stocked here before opening day.

Below Clearview Reservoir, East Licking offers another 10 miles of larger stocked water as it meanders through the farmlands of Juniata County. The lower section of East Licking travels through privately held property. However, general access remains good.

Licking Creek Drive (SR 4002) turns off of Route 333 at the village of Mifflin and provides good access to most of the stream. The lower sections are bridged by State Routes 3011 and 3010, off Route 333 south of Mifflin.

Raystown Branch, Juniata River. This branch of one of Pennsylvania's largest and best-loved rivers is a fine trout stream in its upper reaches. It wanders through the mountain valleys and farmlands of southern Bedford County.

The Raystown Branch is stocked with brown trout and rainbow trout over a 20-mile stretch that begins near New Baltimore in Somerset County, and continues downstream almost to downtown Bedford. This is big water, averaging more than 70 feet wide in some places.

Route 31 parallels the majority of the stocked section of the Raystown Branch, and provides good access to the stream. Most of the Raystown Branch flows through privately owned land that is open to anglers through the courtesy of local landowners.

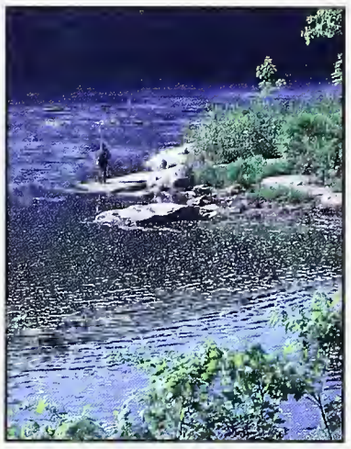
Cove Creek. Also known locally as Big Cove Creek, this waterway is one of the major trout streams of mountainous Fulton County, with about 14 miles of stocked water that flow ever southward through the small crescent of Pennsylvania drained by the Potomac River.

The stocked section of Cove Creek begins near McConnellsburg in west-central Fulton County. These upper reaches are easily accessed from Route 522. The stream picks up several high-quality cold-water tributaries as it winds south past Webster's Mills and Big Cove Tannery. Below Big Cove Tannery, Cove Creek flows through a more isolated wooded area where anglers must walk in to reach the water. The newly formed Fulton County Chapter of Trout Unlimited assists in float-stocking this portion of the stream. Access to the lower reaches of Cove Creek

is via Route 928 near the village of Potts Mills.

Northcentral

Northcentral Pennsylvania, with its abundance of fine trout water and vast tracts of state forest land, is one of the best choices for the opening day angler seeking new water to explore.



Hyner Run. This small Clinton County freestoner joins the West Branch of the Susquehanna River about six miles east of Renovo along Route 120. There are slightly more than four miles of stocked water here, the upper reaches of which flow through Hyner Run State Park. Access is excellent from a state forest road that parallels the stream in the park.

Hyner Run's rhododendron-clad runs and pools are well-stocked with brown trout and brook trout before opening day. A pair of additional bonuses for the opening day angler is the stream's Right and Left Branches. Both are stocked with brook trout before the season opener. They offer a small-stream getaway from the main stem of Hyner.

White Deer Creek. A major trout stream of its region, White Deer Creek flows for over 20 miles across northern Union County to meet the Susquehanna at the village of White Deer. The stream travels for the most part through the wooded confines of the Bald Eagle State Forest, and overall access is very good.

Access to the upper reaches of White Deer Creek is via a dirt road that leads west from the picnic area at McCall Dam State Park. The stream is small and brushy in this section, but is well worth fishing. Farther downstream, a larger White deer emerges from a three-mile delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only section to offer another 10 plus miles of stocked water. The upper portion of this stretch is paralleled by White Deer Creek Road, which joins State Route 1010 to follow the stream to its mouth.

Southwest

From the urban sprawl of greater Pittsburgh to the rugged ridges of Somerset County, southwest Pennsylvania is a region of sharp contrasts. Commission Area 8 Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson oversees the waterways of this area. He recommends the following pair of area streams to opening day anglers seeking someplace new.

Clear Shade Creek. Clear Shade Creek is a moderate-size stream that flows through a remote, beautiful section of northeast Somerset County. A 6.7-mile section of the stream from Pine Lake, north of Ogletown, downstream to one mile above Windber Reservoir is well stocked with brook trout before opening day.

Much of this section of Clear Shade flows through the Gallitzin State Forest, and access is excellent. Crumb Road (T816) bisects this portion of the stream, providing bridge access. State Route 56 crosses Clear Shade farther upstream at Ogletown. The stream is float-stocked in the section between these crossings.

Deer Creek. Deer Creek is a surprisingly good trout stream that flows along the eastern edge of Pittsburgh to meet the Allegheny River near Harmarville. Area Fisheries Manager Lorson says that the entire eight-mile stocked stretch of Deer creek has good water quality and abundant trout habitat. Indeed, Lorson notes that recent surveys indicate some brown trout reproduction is taking place in the stream.

Deer Creek is stocked preseason with brown and rainbow trout for 1.7 miles upstream from the junction of State Route 910 and T-678 near Indianola. From this road junction downstream for 2.1 miles, Deer Creek is under delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only regulations. Another 4.4 miles of open water lie below the special reg area, and this section is easily accessible from Route 910. The New Kensington-based Tri-County Trout Club helps float-stock this portion of Deer Creek.

Northwest

In Pennsylvania's "Great Northwest," there are many excellent opening day destinations for the angler looking for someplace new.

Thompson Run. The small size of this Warren County freestone stream belies the quality of the stream's stocked trout fishery. Not to be confused with Thompson Creek, its better known sister stream in Crawford County, Thompson Run falls off the ridges along the west bank of the Allegheny River about seven miles north of Tidioute at the village of Althom.

The stocked section of Thompson Run cuts a narrow valley through State Game Lands 86. The stream is stocked preseason with brook trout and brown trout from the mouth upstream two miles. Thompson Run may be reached by taking State Route 3007 north out of Tidioute to Althom, where the stream is bridged. Just beyond this bridge, a dirt spur to the left leads to a game lands parking area. Vehicles are prohibited beyond this point. You may park here and explore as far upstream as you wish on foot.

East Branch, Sugar Creek. A good portion of this moderate-sized Venango County stream near Cooperstown flows through the wooded bottomlands of State Game Land 96, and is stocked with all three species of trout before opening day.

The East Branch is born with the junction of Little Sugar Creek and Prather Creek along Route 428 near Wallaceville. Both these streams are also stocked and offer good opening day angling. The six miles of the East Branch from the junction to the mouth near Cooperstown are stocked and are for the most part open to fishing.

Access to the East Branch is via Township Road 598 (Davis Road), which parallels the stream from the mouth along Route 427 north of Cooperstown up into the game lands, and offers numerous parking spots.

Remember that tactics and techniques can be just as critical to opening day success as stream selection. The cold waters of April call for you to fish your bait slowly and deeply through the pools, and near obstructions like log jams and boulders. In high water, pay particular attention to places where trout can rest away from the full force of the current. Be persistent. If a particular pool or pocket looks like it just has to have a fish in it, it probably does. Try different drifts and approaches until you score.

Minnows, red worms and salmon eggs are the tried-and-true opening day staples, but don't be afraid to give unconventional baits like small crayfish and wood grubs a try. You might be pleasantly surprised at the results.

Above all, enjoy your opening day experience. Give some serious thought to trying a new spot. Pennsylvania's opening day trout bounty is like a buffet that stretches away into infinity. Be sure to sample all you can.

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Special Flies

He said choice of flies is very important if you fish for trout in small streams, and then he said he used only one. Because he had a reputation for both successful angling and honesty, I sought more information, and he said the only fly he used was a wet Grizzly King, but that he was particular about it. He said he didn't tie flies himself but that he did alter all of his flies a little. He said they came with red tails that were too long and he explained he always cut off about a sixteenth of an inch.

After solitary contemplation of an unaltered Grizzly King, I concluded that my friend just didn't feel right about using a completely standard fly, and I even whispered the word *ego* to myself. But the artist who tied the flies probably wouldn't mind if the red tail came up a little short as long as his flies caught an unusual number of trout. Now the Grizzly King certainly looks like something alive in the water, although I am a little uncertain as to just what, and my friend the expert wasn't sure, either. Anyway, I suppose it is a comfort to look at neat rows of duplicate flies in your box and contemplate that probably no other angler has any exactly like them.

For years I fished with a fine fly fisherman who tied his own flies, and on one stream with small but eager trout he set himself a special task. He said he was determined to produce a fly of about the size seemingly preferred by the grabby brookies but of some design they wouldn't strike. He said that by producing a fly that would turn them off, he would be using an established procedure of scientists–the process of elimination. He said that if the wild-eyed little brookies of the test stream found something they wouldn't eat, he'd figure out what feature turned them off and future generations of fly tiers could avoid it. For all I know, he's still working on it.

For years I fished with an angler who was so far ahead of me in trout knowledge that I listened to his pronouncements almost with reverence. Then one day I happened to dig out a pattern that some picky brown trout were willing to take–when my friend Hugh, for once, wasn't accomplishing much. I slogged across a patch of swamp to give him one of the winners, and he was profusely appreciative. I felt pretty important, but a little later I noticed he wasn't using the fly I'd given him. Was he a little uppity despite his friendliness?

He said that if the wild-eyed little brookies of the test stream found something they wouldn't eat, he'd figure out what feature turned them off and future generations of fly tiers could avoid it.

The next day Hugh appeared to be using the fly I'd given him and it seemed to work better than when I was using it. When this sort of thing happened on another trip, it occurred to me

Using somebody else's fly was a shortcut that simply took part of the fun from Hugh's trout. It would be like having someone else do his casting, I guess.

that Hugh had a secret pride and policy. He wouldn't use a trout fly he hadn't tied himself. I figured that out a long time ago, and although it was never mentioned, I realized it was part of his game. Using somebody else's fly was a shortcut that simply took part of the fun from Hugh's trout. It would be like having someone else do his casting, I guess.

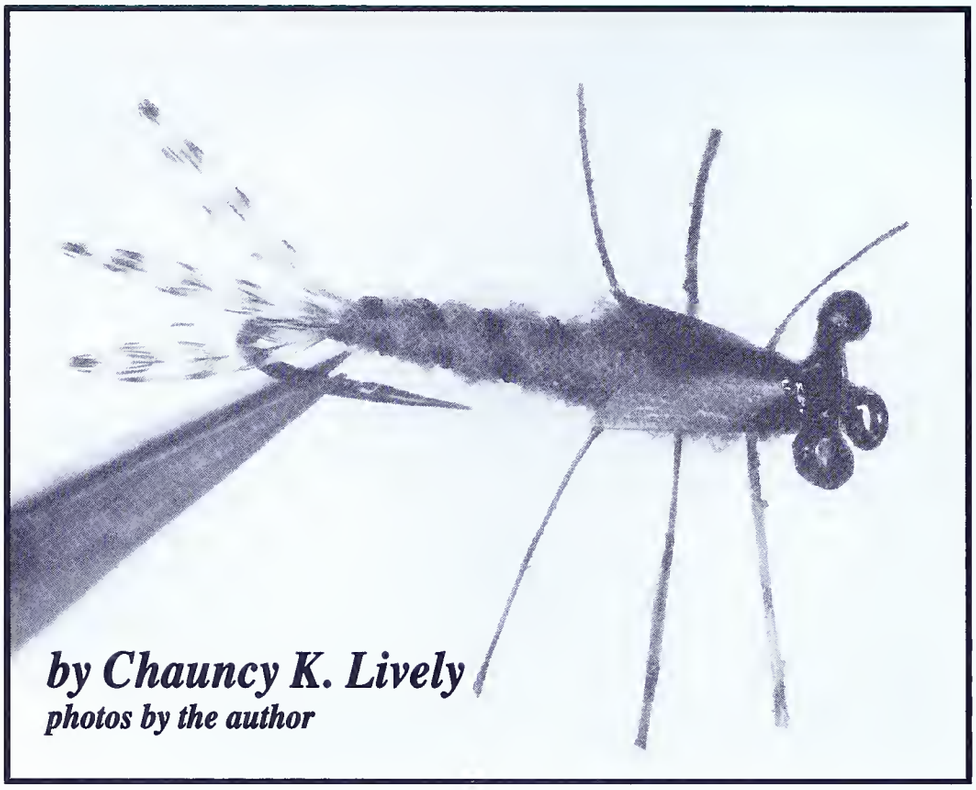
I have my own little streak of sentiment toward flies, involving the person who tied them. Most of the really old ties have somehow gravitated to a couple of old-fashioned fly boxes, and I can think of some of the people I knew who tied them. I've lost track of most of them.

I guess we can say all flies are handmade, even though some of them go through some production shortcuts. And when I use an imported fly, probably tied by a nimble-fingered lady in Columbia, I wonder if she knows what it's used for. I've known great American fly makers who had never seen a fly used in fishing. I was flattered when one lady who produced flies in a sort of blur of educated fingers asked me to explain just how fishermen used the things.

Everybody has favorites, and when it comes to dry flies, visibility for the caster becomes increasingly important with age (they tell me). I don't want to be one of those stubborn veterans who always tends to start out with a favorite, even though an ongoing hatch doesn't look like it at all. But if nothing recognizable flies between me and the water on fairly "technical" streams, I tend to tie on a small caddis pattern with the thought that a real caddis is apt to show up almost anywhere.

Science.

Another Look at Damselfly Nymphs



by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author

A peek into the fly boxes of most fly fishermen reveals an imposing variety of nymphs, designed to meet just about any angling situation. There are unweighted, shallow-running nymphs and floating nymphs. And there are weighted, deep-running nymphs and emergers. Apply appropriate styles to patterns representing the nymphs of various mayflies, caddisflies and stoneflies–the big three of trout stream aquatics–and you have an impressive array of nymph patterns.

Despite thoroughness in anticipating daily stream requirements, many of us overlook damselfly nymphs as a source of subaquatic food. Not so with stillwater anglers, however. In the past two decades, fly fishers who pursue trout in ponds and lakes–in float tubes, canoes or by wading the edges–have recognized damselflies as a significant staple in aquatic pantries, and they have made the most of this knowledge.

Damselfly nymphs inhabit most of our trout streams, and they are often present in great numbers in waterways with significant weed growth. Like dragonfly nymphs, they live in muck and detritus on the stream bottom. They are predaceous on nearly any kind of nymphs or larvae small enough to capture and eat. They also share with dragonfly nymphs an enormous appetite for mosquito larvae, which they consume in great num-



1 First make a thorax platform by cementing the monofil strips to opposite sides of the hook shank. Tie in the thread behind the thorax platform and wind it back to the bend. Tie in the gills at the bend and wind between to separate. Tie in ribbing at the bend.



2 Wax about 3 inches of working thread, apply dubbing to the thread and wind to the thorax platform. Wind the ribbing counterclockwise in spaced turns, tie off and trim the excess.



3 For legs, tie in three lengths of prepared Kevlar thread over the thorax area, spaced as shown. Wax the thread, apply more dubbing and wind to form the thorax. Tie off behind the eye.

bers. Ironically, when they leave their sanctuary to pursue prey, they are most vulnerable to becoming prey themselves. They are also available to trout and other fish when they emerge to the adult stage by climbing weed stalks to reach air.

These nymphs are generally about an inch long, with slender abdomens and fairly large heads bearing prominent eyes. They are usually olive, brownish-olive or gray. At first glance they appear to have three short tails. However, these appendages are actually leaflike gills positioned at the posterior of the abdomen. Damselflies emerge from early spring until fall. In fact, some species are known to emerge as late as November. Thus, these nymphs are available as trout food during most of the typical angling year.

In the December 1969 *Angler* I described the dressing of the Blackwing Nymph, representing the nymph of the common blackwing damselfly. Over the years I've tried to monitor new fly tying materials as they appear on the scene, mainly to find more durable substitutes for fragile materials. We are increasingly finding uses for new synthetics that add considerably to the longevity of our flies without reducing their effectiveness. Our Blackwing Nymph II is a reworking of the original pattern with new legs, eyes and wing case–the parts most vulnerable to damage from sharp teeth.

Since its entry into the market a few years ago, I've been experimenting with Kevlar thread for nymph legs, and it has proven the toughest material I've yet found for this purpose. It is stocked by most material dealers and is now used extensively in dressing large spun-hair bass bugs and saltwater flies. But a word of warning: Don't try to cut this thread with delicate scissors–Kevlar is the material used in bullet-proof vests. You can cut it with a sharp blade, or if you use heavy scissors, cut with the throat of the scissors–not the tip.

I prepare the legs first by cutting a length of thread slightly longer than needed overall. If I want barred legs I mark the thread at intervals with a black or dark-brown marking pen. To prevent fraying I apply a drop of Flexament to one end of the cut thread and spread it with my fingertips. Then the treated thread is cut into three equal lengths, each of which is bound at its middle as legs in the thorax area.

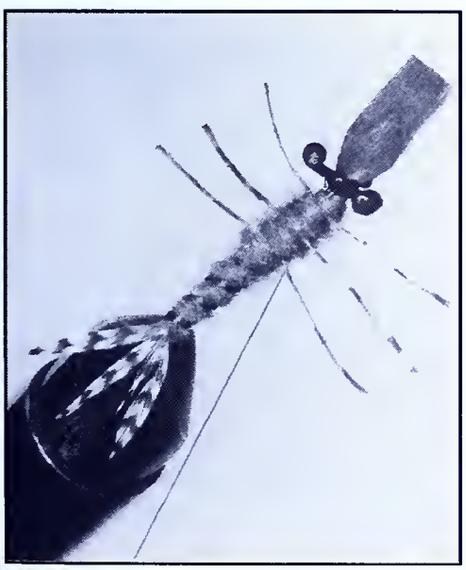
Replacing the original pattern's chenille eyes, I now use the popular monofilament eyes, made by holding the middle of a half-inch length of heavy monofil with tweezers and applying heat from a match or lighter to each end. This melts the monofil to form a ball at each end, producing a unit resembling a miniature barbell.

Originally, I dressed the wing case from a duck or goose wing quill section. A material used for this purpose by many fly dressers of that day. But it is a notoriously fragile material, and even with the drastic measure of coating it on both sides its durability improved only a little. I became interested in the properties of polyethylene film, convinced that it had many applications in fly making, but I was frustrated that I couldn't tint it with marking pens. The color simply wiped off the slick surface onto anything it touched. Then I talked with John Betts of Denver, who knows more about synthetic fly materials than anyone, and he had the solution. Simply rub the film gently with ultrafine sandpaper, using a circular motion, until the film becomes whitish and opaque. Then turn the film over and repeat the procedure. Now it will accept tinting by a permanent marker, and it will last practically forever.

Poly film has become my favorite material for wing cases because of its toughness and ease of dressing. It is stocked in rolls by hardware stores. Or in a slightly thinner gauge, a plastic storage bag will furnish sufficient film for dozens of flies.

I've fished damselfly nymphs successfully in a variety of waterways, but working them along the edges of weed beds in spring creeks is one of my favorite ways to present them.

If you should be lucky enough to come upon a large brown trout standing on its nose, grubbing in the bottom muck, drift your damselfly nymph close by. Chances are it's what he's looking for.



4 For the wing case, prepare a strip of polyethylene film 5/32-inch wide and taper one end to a point. Bind the pointed end to the top of the shank behind the hook eye. Prepare monofil eyes and tie them in over the pointed end of the wing case.



5 Pull the wing case back over the eye shaft and bind it down behind the eyes with two turns. Bring the thread forward and whip finish behind the hook eye. Cut the wing case even with the rear of the thorax and cut a notch in the trailing edge.

Dressing: Blackwing Nymph II

Hook: Size 10 or 12 (preferred), 4X long.
Thorax platform: 2 each, .020-inch monofil strips, one-third the shank length long, glued to the opposite sides of the fore end of the shank.
Thread: 6/0 olive prewaxed.
Posterior gills: 3 grizzly hackle tips.
Ribbing: Brown buttonhole twist thread.
Abdomen and thorax dubbing: Olive natural or synthetic fur.
Legs: Tan Kevlar thread.
Wing case: Polyethylene film, tinted dark gray.
Eyes: Heavy monofilament, tinted black.

Pine Creek

by Seth P. Cassell

Located in the beautiful and pristine northcentral mountains, Pine Creek is one of Pennsylvania's most famous and heralded attractions. Starting out as a small mountain trickle and ending at a size many people consider a river, Pine Creek offers a wide variety of outdoor recreation including rafting, canoeing, camping, and most notably, trout fishing. Thousands of trout fishermen make the trek upstate each year to enjoy opening day on this fabulous creek while simultaneously enjoying some of the best scenery Pennsylvania has to offer, including the state's "Grand Canyon."

Whether you enjoy fishing for wild trout in a mountain stream, casting for lunker browns in "big water," or having a mixed selection of smallmouth bass and trout, Pine Creek certainly accommodates your angling needs.

Of Pine Creek's 86 miles, roughly 50 miles are stocked. From the confluence of the West Branch downstream to Little Pine Creek, 22,000 brown trout, 32,000 rainbow trout, and 90 palomino trout are stocked each year. In addition to the 50 miles of stocked water, Pine Creek has 8.5 miles of Class A Wild Trout Water, which is not currently governed by special regulations.

Because of Pine Creek's extensive length, it is difficult to describe it as a whole. It is better to dissect this mammoth-sized creek into sections to describe the kind of trout fishing each section offers.

Headwaters to Genesee Forks (West Pike)

Pine Creek begins as a mere mountain trickle near Brookland, Potter County. At this point, the creek has the looks of a common mountain brook, making it difficult to believe that the creek actually reaches widths of 200 feet after flowing through Potter, Tioga and Lycoming counties.

From the headwaters to the confluence of the Genesee Forks, the stream offers 8.5 miles of Class A Wild Trout Water that has a mixed bag of wild brook and brown trout. For those anglers who are wild trout enthusiasts, this is definitely the section you want to fish.

Fishing this stretch is quite different from the remainder of the creek. The wild trout don't tolerate noisy wading and sloppy casting. If you approach quietly with a low profile and execute a delicate and accurate cast, your chances of catching trout increase. Also, when fishing this section, a short rod is a great asset because much of the stream here is thick and overgrown, creating havoc when using longer rods.

If you enjoy having some feisty smallmouth bass mixed in with your trout weekend, you're in the right place.

Route 449 parallels Pine Creek downstream to the town of Walton, making access convenient. Midway between Brookland and Walton, there is a good place to park on Route 449 over the Buckseller Run bridge.

Near the town of Walton, Pine Creek gains some volume from Ninemile Run. The creek begins to shed its characteristics of a smaller-sized mountain stream and quickly transforms into a medium-sized trout stream approximately 25 to 30 feet wide. Route 6 parallels the stream here and parking is available around the bridge near Walton. Be warned, however, that the land is posted for about a mile-and-a-half from the confluence of Ninemile Run downstream to Cabin Run.

Genesee Forks (West Pike) to the West Branch (Galeton)

Below the confluence of Genesee Forks, the Fish & Boat Commission begins stocking, but you can still find some wild brown trout. The creek gains more volume from Genesee Forks, which is not approved trout water but is managed for wild trout. Here the creek is still paralleled by Route 6, and you can find a few places to pull off the road and park. About a mile-and-a-half upstream from Galeton, there is a pulloff area along Route 6 and a trail called the Tom Cabin Trail, which leads toward the creek.

The West Branch (Galeton) to Ansonia (Marsh Creek)

Near the town of Galeton, Pine Creek gains another large dose of volume from the West Branch Pine Creek. Here, the stream width increases to approximately 60 to 70 feet. The confluence of the West Branch marks the beginning of Pine Creek's "big water." The fishing here is primarily for stocked trout. The creek in this section is again paralleled by Route 6, and you can find spots to park along the road and around bridges, where you can walk down to the creek. In Ansonia, there is a DER parking and boat launch area. If you are planning a float trip in a canoe or boat, you can launch your boat here.

Grand Canyon (Ansonia to Blackwell)

The Pennsylvania Grand Canyon, also called the Pine Creek Gorge, is one of the most beautiful natural areas in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Grand Canyon is a tourist attraction. It is also a great place to fish and enjoy the breathtaking view and solitude. Rugged mountains rise from the creek almost a thousand feet for a stretch approximately 15 miles, making access difficult. There are no major roads that parallel or cross the creek from Ansonia to Blackwell.



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

Fishing the Grand Canyon is best via float trip. However, for those anglers who would like to fish the canyon on foot, there are access points in Ansonia, Tiadaghton and Blackwell. The Ansonia access point can be reached from Route 6, and the Blackwell access from Route 414.

The Tiadaghton access, which is located midway between the two, is difficult to locate. The best way is from the town of Wellsboro. Take S.R. 3007 into Stoney Fork, and then into Draper. Once in Draper, stay on the main road. The road bears to the right and then goes over a hill and across some farmland. It then drops down, and the road makes a sharp right followed by a sharp left and then goes over a small stream. The road then makes a sharp bend to the right. At this point, you do not want to follow the main road. At the sharp bend, continue straight on the small mountain road. This road leads you to the Tiadaghdon Access Point.

Do not attempt to go to Tiadaghton unless you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

I suggest that those anglers who plan to travel to the Tiadaghton access point stop in at Slate Run Tackle Shop or other local sporting goods stores to obtain a road map of the area or to acquire more detailed instructions to find the Tiadaghton access.

Babb Creek (Blackwell) to Little Pine Creek (Waterville)

This area provides good trout fishing in the spring, but what separates this section from the others is that this lower portion of Pine Creek has an excellent population of smallmouth bass. If you enjoy having some feisty smallmouth mixed in with your "trout weekend," you cannot be in a better place.

This section also stands out because of its terrific access, which makes it easier to get around and fish different places. Routes 414 and 44 parallel the creek from Blackwell downstream to the mouth of Pine Creek. There are access points in Blackwell, near Gamble Run, by the bridge above the village of Slate Run, in the village of Slate Run, near Naval Run, Callahan Run, Bonnell Run, and Ross Run, near Jersey Mills, Browns Run, and in Waterville.

When visiting this section, try a productive side trip of fishing either Slate Run or Cedar Run, which are two of the most notable freestone streams in the state.

Although many trout fishermen visit Pine Creek on opening day, it does not necessarily mean that the fishing will be elbow to elbow as it is on many other trout waters.

Paul Swanson, the Commission Northcentral Regional Law Enforcement Manager, says, "Fishing pressure is high, but not excessive as you find in other parts of the state. This is mainly because Pine Creek is very long and the access is excellent along the entire waterway, so the fishing pressure is evenly distributed."

Swanson also notes that the success rate of trout fishermen on Pine Creek, when the conditions are right, is very high. However, when the stream conditions are not favorable, it can be difficult to catch fish."

Swanson believes Pine Creek is a great asset to Pennsylvania trout fishing because the creek is surrounded by a large tract of public and state-owned land. This ensures that the Pine Creek Valley will remain beautiful and pristine for generations to come. He also notes that Pine Creek is very unique for three reasons. First, the size of the creek is so large that it can readily handle a lot of fishing pressure. Second, there are many trout in the

Pine Creek



Of Pine Creek's 86 miles, roughly 50 miles are stocked. From the confluence of the West Branch downstream to Little Pine Creek, 22,000 brown trout, 32,000 rainbow trout, and 90 palomino trout are stocked each year.

stream, wild and stocked. And third, Pine Creek is floatable, and there aren't many streams in Pennsylvania where you can plan a trout fishing float trip.

Bruce Hollender, Commission Area 3 Fisheries Manager, says, "The entire length of Pine Creek, excluding the portion below Waterville that is not stocked, provides excellent trout fishing in the spring. However, when the water temperatures warm, many trout migrate to the tributaries or other areas to find cooler water. The best overall section, as far as trout conditions are concerned, is above Galeton, before the confluence of the West Branch. The upper reaches of Pine Creek have good water quality, habitat and an excellent population of wild brown trout."

Tackle

Although fly fishermen are usually not as successful on Pine Creek in April as some of the other fishermen, it can still be an exciting and productive way of taking trout.

If you plan to fly fish early in the season, use rods from 8 to 9 feet in weights of 5 to 7. Weight-forward lines are best, but if the water is high as it was in the spring following the blizzard of '93, you may want to use an intermediate sink-tip line.

Because a majority of your fly fishing early in the season includes using large flies in discolored water, hefty leaders in the length of 7 1/2 and 9 feet are best. Strike indicators are also a big help when fishing the high water. Make sure you bring an ample supply of splitshot in several sizes so you can put your offering down where the fish are.

Some nymphs that are usually productive during the early season on Pine Creek are brown and black stone flies, tan, green, olive and black caddisfly nymphs, Quill Gordon nymphs, Hendrickson nymphs, and Blue Quill nymphs.

Hatches

Because of the pristine nature of Pine Creek's water, it is no surprise that Pine Creek boasts some terrific aquatic hatches for the fly fisherman to enjoy. Because of the diverse weather and stream conditions you encounter in the spring, the hatches can be erratic and unpredictable. However, when the time is right, and the insects are popping off the water, the trout waste no time taking advantage of these winged morsels.

Here are the hatches and appropriate sizes of imitations early in the season.

• **Mid-April.** Blue Quill 18, Quill Gordon 14.

• **Late April.** Dark Olive Caddis 16, Green-Sac Caddis 16.

• **Early May.** Tan Caddis 16, Hendrickson 14, Little Black Caddis 18.

In addition to fly patterns mimicking specific aquatic insects, fly fishermen should also carry a wide variety of streamers and attractor flies. Some patterns that I have had success with on Pine Creek are Royal Wulffs in sizes 10 and 12, Woolly Buggers in 4 to 8, Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear in 8 to 14, Royal Coachman streamers in 8 and 10, and an assortment of Glo-Bugs.

Bait fishermen are usually the most successful on Pine Creek during April. In the high, murky water, sometimes a big nightcrawler bounced along the stream bottom is the only method that produces. Minnows also do the trick. Be sure not to retrieve too quickly, because the trout are cold and lethargic this time of year and they do not want to travel a lot or expend a lot of energy to capture their meals.

Salmon eggs, cheese, marshmallows and various other egg-mimicking baits produce the usual good number of trout in April. The trick is, when baitfishing early in the season, to maintain control over your offering and be able to put it where it needs to be on the stream bottom. Adding splitshot is the best method. When drifting, you should be able to feel your bait bouncing on the bottom. If you do not feel this, add a few more splitshot until you get the right feel. On the other hand, if you are constantly getting hung up on the stream bottom, try eliminating a few shot from your line and see how that works.



Fishing spinners and other lures is also popular on Pine Creek. The same rule of keeping the offering low and retrieving it at a snail's pace applies the same for lure-tossers as it does for fly and bait fishermen.

My grandfather, Chris Hershey, who has fished Pine Creek for a half-century, swears by gold and silver spinners. He contends that these are such good producers because the trout can see these lustrous lures much better than the darker-toned ones. White Rooster Tails are also popular. On my first opening day weekend, everyone was catching trout on these lures. Desperate to catch my first trout, I headed to the tackle shop to cash in on the action. To my dismay, they were sold out. Without the White Rooster Tail, I did not catch a single fish that weekend.

Regardless of which fraternity of trout fishermen you come from, you will enjoy catching trout and fishing on Pine Creek. To make your weekend more enjoyable, heed the advice of the Boy Scouts–"Be Prepared." Be ready to encounter the variety of weather from snow to bright, sunny days and stream conditions ranging from raging, high murky water to just right for drifting a delicate dry fly. If the weather and stream conditions do not cooperate, or if it just wasn't your weekend to catch fish, at least you got "skunked" while fishing one of the most beautiful areas of Pennsylvania.

If I Had Only ONE Fly

by Jeff Bryan





Any sudden line movement, darting upstream or side to side, can signal a strike. Set the hook. When in doubt, set the hook.

One bright, beautiful day early last spring, I convinced a friend to come along and find out for himself what all the fuss is about fly fishing and why it has been such a large part of my life for the last 20 years. With the temperature nudging into the 70s and a few white, fluffy clouds in the sky, I figured that even if the fishing were slow, we'd still have an enjoyable day outdoors. I needn't have worried.

Once in the water, after rigging the rods and donning our waders, I got him positioned at the top of a long riffle that had produced well for me in the past, and I helped him tie an olive Woolly Bugger to the tippet. With very little instruction, he made a decent straight-line cast toward the far bank and promptly got the line wrapped around the reel and the rod handle. With his head down, concentrating on the tangle of line, the river gradually worked its magic, straightening the leader and tippet so that the fly swam gently in the current below him. Suddenly, the rod tip shot toward the surface, causing both of us to jump in surprise.

I'm still not sure who was more astonished, my friend or the pretty little 12-inch rainbow that he managed to bring to hand, but that olive Woolly Bugger showed him, in less time than it took me to write this, why I rented "A River Runs Through It" six times. My apologies to Norman Maclean, but if fly fishing were a religion, then surely the first song in the hymnal would sing the praises of the Woolly Bugger.

This fly, so simple to tie and fish, is certain to be found near the top of any fly angler's list of most popular flies. Created by Russ Blessing of Harrisburg, PA, the Woolly Bugger, in any of its many forms, catches trout and smallmouth bass from north to south and east to west. It is as versatile a fly as you can find, and it deserves a special place all its own in your fly box.

Even though I have yet to find a "wrong" way to fish the Woolly Bugger, over the years I have stumbled across some very "right" ways to use this fly to fool

photos Jeff Bryan

many large trout and smallmouth bass. Usually categorized as a streamer, the Woolly Bugger effectively becomes a nymph with one mend of your fly line, and combining both streamer and nymph tactics lets you cover a large stretch of water very efficiently. The Woolly Bugger is arguably the greatest of all searching patterns, and when I step into a river with no fish visibly rising, I inevitably reach for my bugger box.

There are two main tactics I use when fishing the Woolly Bugger–the dead drift and the streamer swing. Each method presents the fly to the fish differently and you should try them both each time you step into the river, changing tactics frequently throughout the day.

Dead drift

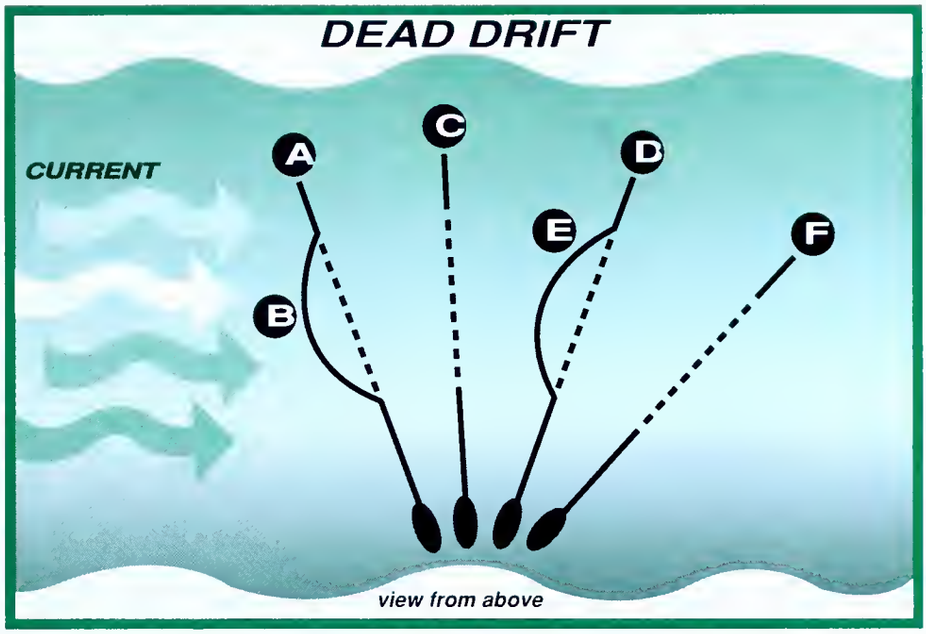
Dead-drifting a Woolly Bugger does not mean that you simply chuck it out into the river and let it float downstream unattended. It is very important to stay in touch with your fly at all times, constantly aware of its position in the water, to have a chance at recognizing a strike and setting the hook. Yanking your rod tip into the air, only to drag many feet of slack line off the water, does not make for good hook sets.

Fishing a Woolly Bugger with a dead drift directly upstream is my favorite method for working pocket water and deep riffles. This tactic puts you close to the fish while using relatively short casts, and quickly gets the fly moving along the stream bottom with a natural drift. However, staying in touch with your fly can be difficult. One way to ensure that you maintain control over your fly, and can detect the strike, is to keep your rod tip at a 45-degree angle to the water while stripping line just fast enough to keep the fly moving at the same speed as the current. You probably will not "feel" the take, so you must pay strict attention to the point where your fly line or leader enters the water.

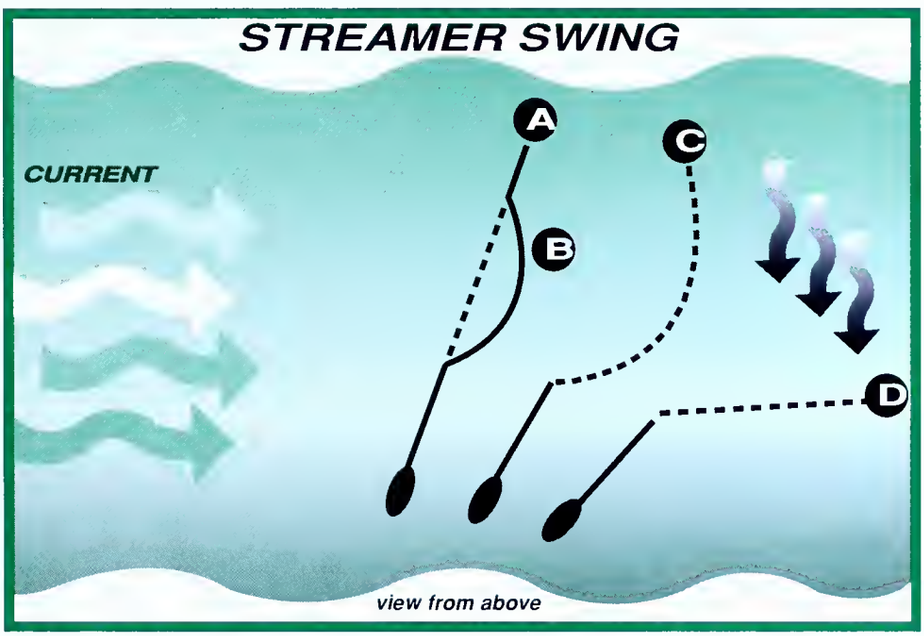
Any sudden line movement, darting upstream or side to side, can signal a strike. Set the hook. When in doubt, set the hook. I can't count the number of times that I've seen a fisherman lift the rod tip, preparing to make another cast, only to discover a wildly bucking fish at the end of his line. It's certainly happened to me. Set the hook.

The second dead-drift technique that I use is called the "outrigger method." It was popularized on the South Platte in Colorado. Drag is the enemy when fishing a fly in this manner.

This drift is accomplished by quartering a fairly short cast upstream and immediately tossing an upstream mend when the fly hits the water. As the fly floats toward you, raise the rod tip so that the slack line is lifted off the water, letting the fly line drop straight from the rod tip to the surface of the stream, on down to your fly. Continue to follow the fly with your rod as it floats past you, lowering the tip as needed to keep that straight line, yet not interfere with the drift. Just move the rod at the same speed as the current. This ensures a drag-free drift, and because there is no slack line between you and the fly, hook-setting is easier.



Cast to A and mend to B. Follow the fly as it travels to C, raising the rod tip to keep a straight line as the fly gets closer. When the fly begins to drag at D, mend again to E. As the fly drifts away from you to F, lower the rod tip and follow the fly.



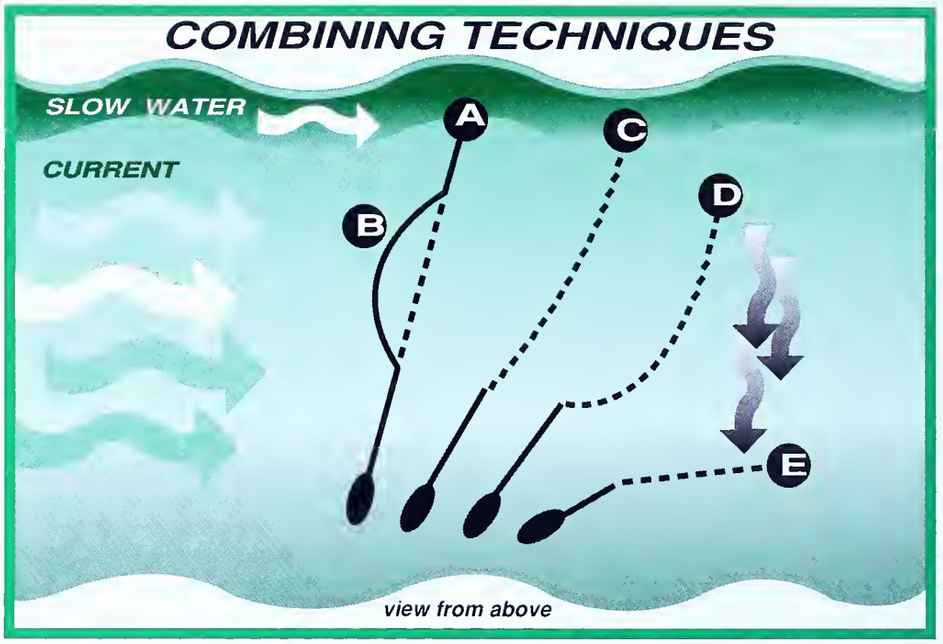
Cast to A and immediately throw a big downstream mend to B. When the line develops a deep belly, begin to strip the fly across the current to D. Twitch and "pump" the rod, and remember to vary your retrieve.

When the fly reaches the end of the dead drift, stop your rod and let the current push the Woolly Bugger to the surface of the water. This upward fly movement simulates a nymph struggling off the river bottom, and many of your strikes will come at this point. Pennsylvanian James Leisenring perfected this deadly technique, known as the "Leisenring lift." If you do not get a take after trying the "lift," retrieve your fly with varying strips of line before making another cast.

You might think that a strike indicator would come in handy during a dead drift. The answer is "yes," but many "corky," or bobber-style, indicators can be a disadvantage when fishing a Woolly Bugger. These kinds of indicators

If I Had Only ONE Fly

tend to hold the fly at a static depth, so they hinder your ability to use streamer techniques. I like to use many different tactics while fishing a Woolly Bugger, and I hate to mess continually with my tackle, so I don't use them. Make the point at which your fly line enters the water your "indicator." It works very well and allows you to fish the Woolly Bugger in different ways with little fuss.



Cast the fly to the slow water behind the ledge at A and upstream mend to B. Continue to dead-drift the fly to C. When the fly begins to belly downstream at D, start the streamer swing and strip the fly to E to finish the cast.

Streamer swing

Very simple to master, the streamer swing is an exciting way to fish. It is an active method that covers a great deal of water and often produces jarring strikes. Make your cast across and a little downstream, and then throw a downstream mend, creating a big belly in the fly line. Turn so that you are facing downstream, hold your rod at a 45-degree angle to the water, and retrieve the fly with strips of the fly line. Many experts teach to point the rod at the fly during the retrieve. I don't agree with this because there is no "give" in the rod, and a hard-hitting fish will often break off. Holding the rod at a 45-degree angle lets the rod act as a shock absorber and results in more hookups.

The downstream belly of line forces the Woolly Bugger to swim directly across the current, presenting its profile to the fish. This is the key to using the streamer swing. Vary the speed and length of your strips during the retrieve until you discover the style that produces strikes. If you can stand near the middle of a stream and cast to both banks, you can cover most of the water and show your fly to a great number of fish. Take care to guide your fly next to, under and around structure such as rocks and logs.

Combining methods

One big factor contributing to the Woolly Bugger's effectiveness, and the reason why I like it so much, is its flexibility. Not only can it be fished as a nymph or a streamer, but it can be manipulated to do both during the same drift.

Picture yourself standing in the middle of a stream. You are in a beautiful run of broken water with a rock ledge on the far side of the run that has created a small dropoff into slower water. The seam created by this ledge is prime holding water, and is tailor-made for a dead drift. The faster water of the bordering run, however, calls for streamer techniques. If you are fishing a Woolly Bugger, preferably one with lead eyes, you can do both.

Make a fairly long, straight-line cast well into the slower water. Then quickly mend the line upstream, dead-drifting the fly along the ledge. Following the fly with your rod at a 45-degree angle, let the line belly downstream and then start the streamer swing. Strikes often come just as the fly crosses the seam and begins to swim across the current. Besides varying your retrieve during this cast, try gently "pumping" the rod to impart a little different action to the fly.

Throughout all seasons, in rivers, ponds and lakes, the Woolly Bugger is a deadly fly for bass, trout and other gamefish. Tell me that I can have only one fly pattern, and no matter if I'm after bonefish in the Florida Keys, brown trout in the Yellow Breeches, or smallmouth in the Susquehanna, I'd pick the Woolly Bugger.

The Lead-Eyed Woolly Bugger

There are as many ways to tie a Woolly Bugger as there are people to tie them. My favorite pattern is one that I settled on a few years ago. The key ingredient, I think, is the addition of lead eyes to the top of the hook shank.

The purpose of the lead eyes is twofold. First, they add crucial weight to the fly, which helps when probing pockets and holes as it forces the fly deeper and faster. The longer your fly drifts at the level of the fish, the better your chance for a hookup. Second, with the lead eyes strapped to the top of the hook-shank, the fly rides upside down, effectively making it snagless.

The Woolly Bugger can, of course, be tied in many different colors, depending on the species of fish you are after. For instance, crawfish colors of tan/brown/orange/yellow work great for smallmouth bass. My favorite colors for trout happen to be black and olive.



Hook: Dai-Riki 700, Mustad 38941, or TMC 300. Wrap with lead wire–.015-inch for a size 10.
Thread: Black, 8/0.
Tail: Olive, mottled turkey-butt marabou.
Hackle: Grizzly.
Body: Peacock herl.
Shellback: Olive Flashabou.
Collar: Olive hen patch.
Eyes: 1/50-oz. for sizes 4 to 10, 1/100-oz. for size 12 and smaller.

Lake Arthur's Bass
DOUBLE-HEADER

by Darl Black



Some of the largest stripers fall victim to live bait. This involves fishing shiners or bluegills with a slip bobber.

Moonlight illuminated the water and sky with a soft, eerie glow. Shoreline trees looked like an army of silent giants standing guard over a special treasure.

With angling accomplice Sam Hossler vigilant in the bow, I steered the boat slowly past ominous Nealy Point. Small spots of harsh white light dotted the lake. The large number of boat lights was proof positive that stripers had been hitting the previous nights.

Earlier that evening our first stop had been a location provided to me by a reliable source. Reportedly several good fish had been taken there two days ago. However, for us that bank remained quiet well after dark with no sign of baitfish or striper activity. We decided to move to a backup spot. As I approached the point leading to "no-fail" bay, I cut the motor and listened.

The steady *splish-splash* of jumping alewives was clear. So was the loud, deep *splat* of larger fish feeding on the alewives.

"Stripers or largemouths–I don't know which, but my gosh it sounds like a massacre going on there," I blurted out to Sam. "Let's get those lines wet! This is going to be a night to remember!"

Photos Darl Black

It was a night to remember. But not in the way I had hoped. The moonlight let us see black holes open on the surface as hungry gamefish engulfed alewives. We feverishly worked a variety of lures to imitate the surface-cruising baitfish. At times the water right beside the boat exploded as an alewife skipped the surface with a predator right on its tail. Yet, 45 minutes later we had not landed a single fish of any species. Heck, neither of us had a strike or even a bump.

Under another full moon, John Galida and I had enjoyed a successful night of Lake Arthur largemouth and striper fishing. However, this time, Sam and I were victims of too bright a night. The difference was cloud cover. Hossler and I fished under very clear skies with the full moon shining brightly. Galida and I fished under solid cloud cover that created a black night.

I had been warned of the bright-moon syndrome by experienced Lake Arthur fishermen, but only halfheartedly believed it. It was like trout feeding exclusively on a particular hatch. Only in this case, the predator fish could seemingly tell the difference between alewives and lures under the moonlight. Sometimes it takes personal experience to bring a point home.

Arthur's treasure

Lake Arthur is the shimmering gem of Moraine State Park in Butler County. The 3,200-acre lake is one of the best warmwater fisheries in the state, drawing large numbers of anglers from all over Pennsylvania as well as neighboring states. Species in the lake include channel cats, crappies, bluegills, walleyes, muskies and basses. The basses–black bass and striped bass–are the main success story and the chief reason for Lake Arthur's popularity with anglers.

The term *black bass* covers both largemouth and smallmouth bass, the two largest members of the sunfish family. Fifteen years ago, if a Lake Arthur angler mentioned bass, it was automatically assumed he was talking about largemouth bass because it was the only "bass" in the lake. However, in recent years anglers have caught smallmouth bass, too.

"The smallmouth population is growing slowly but steadily," says Craig Billingsley, Commission Area Fisheries Manager. "I have been very surprised at the numbers and sizes of smallies that are turning up in our electrofishing during spring surveys."

Through the years largemouth bass have done exceptionally well in Arthur, so fisheries biologists saw no reason to spoil a good thing. Smallmouths were never stocked by the Commission. They just mysteriously appeared, probably the result of unauthorized and therefore illegal introduction by anglers.

Lake Arthur has consistently led all waters in the state with Angler's Awards for largemouth bass. An award is given for a bass weighing at least 5 pounds, legally caught by a fisherman. The individual submits a special application form to the Fish & Boat Commission, and in turn receives an Angler's Award certificate.

To protect Arthur's outstanding largemouth fishery, the lake has undergone regulation changes. During the mid-1980s, it was placed in the Conservation Lake category, which, along with other special panfish and gamefish regulations, permitted a daily harvest only of two black bass over 15 inches in length. Then in 1992, Arthur was moved into the newly created Big Bass Program, which allowed a daily creel limit of four bass at least 15 inches in length.

"Since we have gone from Conservation Lake to Big Bass regulations, that is, from a two-bass to four-bass creel regulation, I have not seen a change in the status of the bass fishery based on our electrofishing surveys," says Billingsley. "Perhaps this means more people are practicing catch and release on the lake. There is always the possibility of another regulation change in the future to maintain a quality bass fishery."

Growth rates on Arthur's largemouth remain above average compared to other lakes in the state. Largemouth growth is believed to be spurred by the abundance of alewives in the lake, although there is no hard data to support this.

"It's apparent that the largemouth feed on the alewives because the bass we capture at night electrofishing spit up alewives," says Billingsley. "Furthermore, it appears someone thought they were giving us a helping hand again because gizzard shad showed up in our fall sampling for the first time. I don't know how this will affect the lake's dynamics."

Besides being illegal, biologists frown on angler introduction of non-native fish species into a lake because it is likely to upset the balance. Already loaded with plankton-feeding alewives, the appearance of gizzard shad may further complicate an already complex fishery.

Arthur's other bass species, the striper, was introduced by biologists to help control the alewife population. Although locals use the term "striper," the Lake Arthur fish are actually hybrid stripers. Hybrids are a cross between striped bass and white bass, and they cannot reproduce in the wild. They don't reach the proportions of a pure striper, but hybrids grow faster and fight harder than their bigger cousins.

"The current striper population in Lake Arthur is outstanding," says Billingsley. "This past spring's trap nets yielded our best sampling ever. All these fish were between 18 and 23 inches. It appeared they were all a single year class, three-year-olds to be exact. Evidently, we had excellent survival of stocked fingerlings that year."

With no chance for natural reproduction, the lake's hybrid population depends on the success of stocking.

Striper techniques

"There have been several hybrids caught that hit 17 1/2 pounds," says John Galida, a former area tackle shop owner and now, in his spare time, a Lake Arthur fishing guide. "There are reliable reports of big fish breaking heavy lines. It has happened to me–it's like having your line tied to a freight train and trying to stop it. There is a good chance that a hybrid over 20 pounds is swimming around the lake."

According to Galida, patterns for Lake Arthur stripers can be narrowed down to three or four presentations.

Some of the largest stripers fall victim to live bait. This involves fishing shiners or bluegills with a slip bobber. During daylight hours in the summer, anglers target the deep water off points. They drift with the breeze or use the electric motor to troll slowly, rather than anchor in one spot.

A second productive presentation is casting soft-plastic grubs on the flats when stripers move up to chase bait during evening and morning hours. A white, pearl or baitfish-colored grub is preferred, rather than either a dark or gaudy colored grub.

"Of course, night fishing is tough to beat," says Galida. "Use a stickbait, such as a Rapala, Redfin, or Bomber Long A, and retrieve it slowly within two feet of the surface. Or try the surface disturber approach with a Chug Bug, Spook, or Woodchopper.

"Night fishing is the most exciting way to pursue stripers, but as you well know from personal experience, Darl, it can be very frustrating, too. Some nights there is activity going on all around, but you can't put a single fish in the boat."

Lake Arthur's Bass DOUBLE-HEADER

Lake Arthur's Other Fish

Area Fisheries Manager Craig Billingsley briefly summarizes his 1993 surveys on the other species in Lake Arthur.

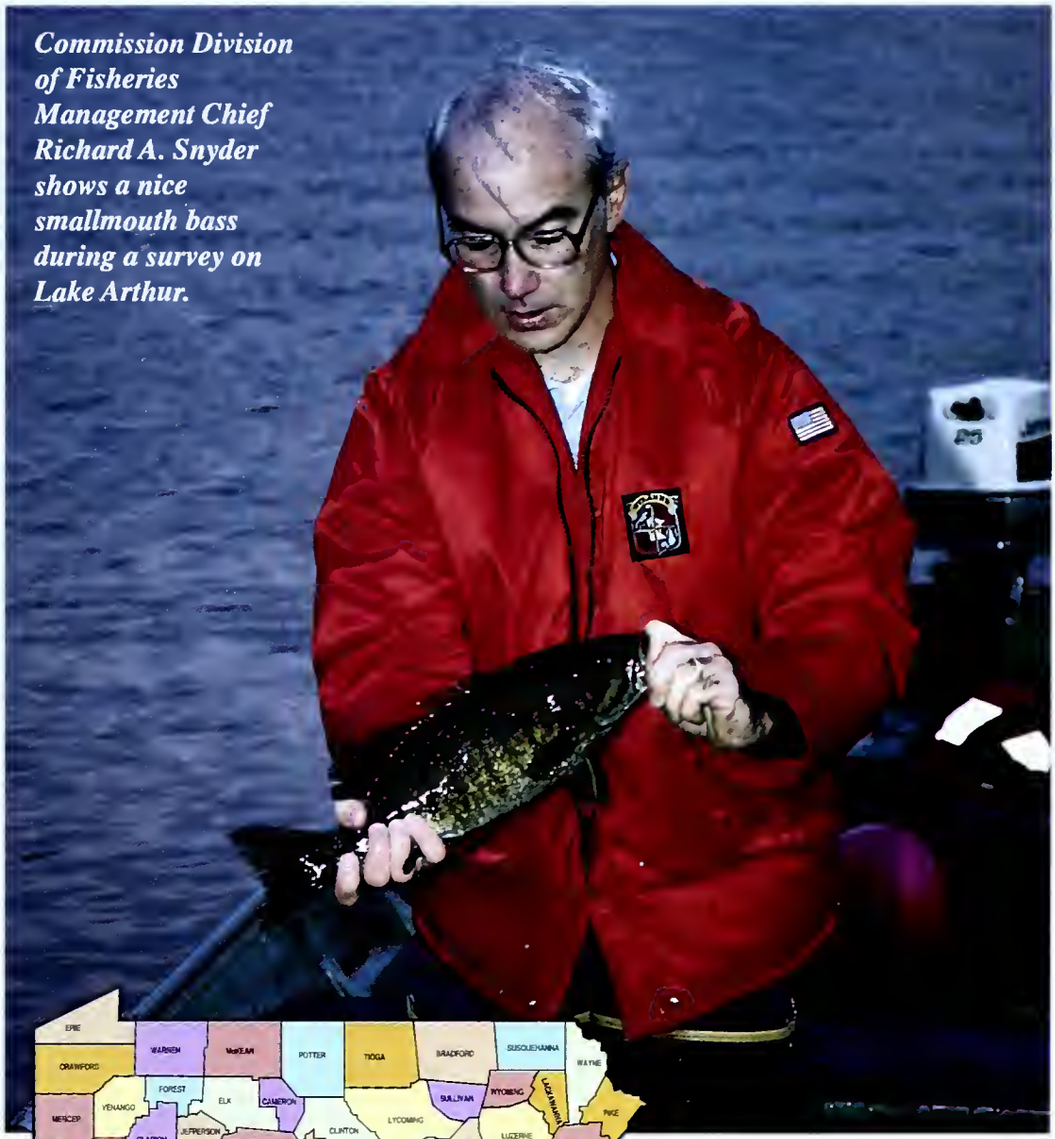
• **Muskies.** We found Arthur to be one of our better musky fisheries. One net had 7 legal fish in it. That is unusual.

• **Channel catfish.** Beautiful fishery. We find numbers of cats in excess of 40 inches. Those are monsters.

• **Panfish.** Since dropping the restrictive Conservation Regulations of 15 panfish, the crappies and bluegills seem to be improving in size. This may be caused by anglers harvesting more panfish, thereby allowing better growth of these prolific fish.

• **Walleyes.** We didn't find a large population, but we did find fish in all sizes from 10 to 33 inches. That range of sizes is an excellent sign of various year-class survival.

• **Northern pike.** We had one in a trap net this year. We rarely see pike any more. They don't compete well for forage with the other species in Lake Arthur.–*DB*.



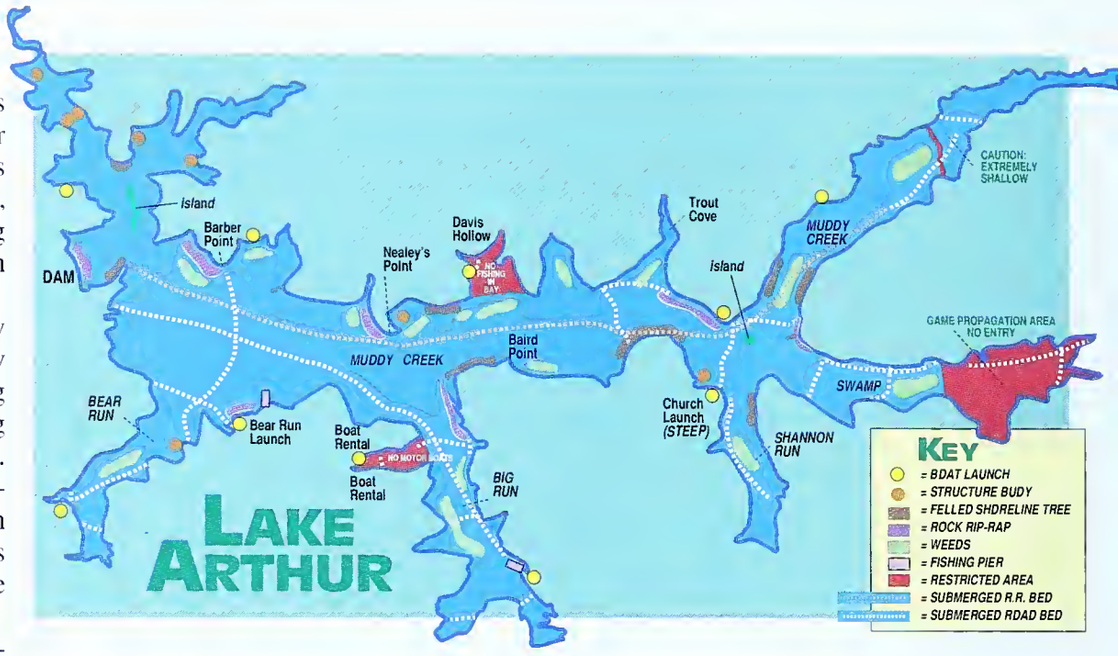
Commission Division of Fisheries Management Chief Richard A. Snyder shows a nice smallmouth bass during a survey on Lake Arthur.



The basses–black bass and striped bass–are the main success story and the chief reason for Lake Arthur's popularity with anglers.

The prime night fishing for stripers occurs in the spring and early summer while alewives are shallow. This lasts until late June or perhaps early July, with striper night activity slowing in the late summer because baitfish patterns change.

"In the fall, striper feeding activity picks up again, but it's the old story about Pennsylvania anglers putting the rods away too soon and getting the gun or bow out," says Galida. "There are fewer guys out there fishing, so fewer fish are caught than during the spring. Hybrid catches slow when the water temperature drops below 50 degrees."



How do you go about finding stripers at Arthur? What kind of habitat do they prefer?

"Close to deep water–that is where you will find them," says Billingsley. "Hybrids may turn up anywhere in the lake, as long as they are not far from deep water. But at night they may move right up to the shoreline."

Galida concurs. "Arthur is only a 3,200-acre lake. It's not a big TVA lake with a river system, and it's not real deep. The hybrid schools can't go anywhere. So each day it's a matter of eliminating water to find the right pattern. If the stripers are not on the points, they may be on flats. If not on points or flats, they must be suspended over creek channels or on mid-lake humps."

Black bass bonanza

Lake Arthur's largemouth fishing has changed over the years. When I first started fishing the lake, the majority of summer largemouth bass came from deep structure. There was very little shallow vegetation.

"Today, probably 25 percent of Arthur is in weed cover," says Galida. "This provides a lot of shallow-water bass habitat. But the lake still has a lot of deep cover, too. And the major baitfish, alewife, can be found in the shallows at certain times, and in the open waters at other times.

"During the summer there are largemouths in lily pads in 15 inches of water, on the deep weed edge in 6 to 7 feet of water, and on mid-lake structures that may top off at 14 feet. Largemouths are to be found everywhere. It's just a matter of getting them to hit. Often that is no small task because of the abundance of natural baitfish."

To be prepared to fish largemouths on Arthur, it's a good idea to have topwater baits for the early morning action–spinnerbaits and weedless spoons for the dense vegetation; jig-and-pig for wood cover; plus crankbaits, worms, jigging spoons, and grubs for deeper, open-water fish. Galida says that Arthur is a lake for everyone because you can catch largemouth bass doing what you like to do best.

Jerry Swidzinski, a frequent fishing companion of Galida, likes to fish Arthur's deep cover.

"My favorite style is fishing plastic worms and grubs on brushpiles and offshore structure. I like the warmer water of summer when many bass have moved deep. Time of day does not matter to me. It can be early morning or the middle of the day. Actually, the sun high in the sky seems to be better for my style of fishing."

Watching Jerry and John fish deep structure is like observing a military operation. Using landmarks that they have pinpointed over years on the lake, they crisscross a small area while minding the depthfinder screen. When the sonar shows the desired channel, bridge abutment, roadbed, hump or brush pile, they drop a small floating structure quietly over the side.

As one positions the boat up wind, the other drops the anchor off the bow. Both take up position in the stern and fan cast to the structure. Each uses a different lure presentation until they identify exactly what the bass are hitting that day. Some days it's a crankbait; other times it's a worm or grub. After covering the structure thoroughly from one position, they pull the anchor and reposition the boat or move to a different structure. All this happens smoothly and quickly with a minimum of conversation.

Even though it is apparent this angling team thoroughly enjoys fishing deep, Galida's advice also includes checking the shallower vegetation. "Buzzbaits are often effective in the very shallow grass in the early morning. By mid-morning, anglers should be running spinnerbaits through coontail clumps or pitching Texas-rigged worms to milfoil weedbeds," Galida says.

Future directions

Smallmouths make up a small segment of the black bass population. Many casual anglers have fished the lake for years without catching one. The best pattern for smallies is topwater baits on main-lake points during the early morning.

Some fishermen may ponder the possibility of a new record largemouth cruising the forage-rich waters of Lake Arthur. However, few hard-core local anglers believe a bass can make it to 10 pounds in the lake.

Fishing pressure on Arthur is very intense. The forage and habitat is capable of growing exceptionally large bass, but angler harvest of significant numbers of 4-, 5-, and 6-pound fish appears to limit the chance of Arthur becoming a true "hawg" lake under present regulations. The largest verified Arthur largemouth weighed 8 1/2 pounds.

On the other hand, local anglers are expecting a 20-pound striper any day now. A hybrid of that size would be twice as heavy as Commission biologists anticipated when they began striper stocking in Arthur a decade ago.

If bass fishing–either stripers or black bass–is your cup of tea, then Lake Arthur is one place not to pass by. The treasures of Arthur await.

Commission Proposes Two Changes for Stripers

The Fish and Boat Commission is proposing two different changes in the size restrictions regulating striped bass angling in the Commonwealth. The first suggested change, which could raise the minimum size limit on striped bass and striper hybrids five inches beginning in 1995, would affect all inland waters, including the Youghiogheny and Conowingo reservoirs. Another initiative would slightly lower the standard now in effect on the Delaware River.

Striped bass regulations for inland waters have remained virtually unchanged since the species was introduced in the early 1970s. At that time, the true growth potential of the species was not yet fully known. Subsequent information gathered on growth rates and angler harvest of striped bass and hybrids has prompted the Commission to consider a stricter 20-inch minimum size regulation.

According to Del Graff, Director of the Bureau of Fisheries, the proposed restriction would provide two main benefits. In waters that contain true striped bass–such as Raystown Lake–the higher minimum size should reduce harvest of young fish and contribute to increased catches of larger fish. Secondly, in those waters with striped bass hybrids, the higher size limit would allow the stripers to take better advantage of plentiful baitfish populations. Overabundance of baitfish such as gizzard shad and alewife has been shown to have negative effects on panfish and gamefish populations in some areas.

At the same time, the Commission is proposing to lower the size restriction currently in place on the Delaware River. There, no fish smaller than 36 inches may be harvested. That rule could be eased to 34 inches under the Commission's new plan. Such an alteration would bring Pennsylvania regulations in line with rules that neighboring New Jersey plans to implement on the river.

The easing of regulations by both states has been prompted by increases in striped bass populations in the Delaware River and Bay. "These increases have been brought about by collective conservation management measures instituted in 1985, when coastal striped bass populations were at low levels," said Graff.

The various closed season restrictions downstream from Trenton Falls in Morrisville will remain in effect. The closed season regulations are designed to protect concentrations of adults wintering in the bay during January and February, allow some harvest in March and then protect spawning fish in April and May.

Both proposals were given tentative approval at the Commission's quarterly meeting in Harrisburg last January. Public comment on the suggested regulations is currently being accepted and a final vote on the items will be taken later this year. Comments may be sent to: Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

In other action at the January 24 meeting:

• Two new stretches of Big Bass waters were created for 1995. A total of 9.7 miles of the Allegheny River in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties was added to the Big Bass Program, as was an 18.5-mile stretch of the Juniata River in Juniata and Perry counties.

In the Allegheny, water between Lock and Dam 3 at Acmetonia and Lock and Dam 4, Natrona, would be affected. The Juniata between Port Royal and Newport would also be managed under Big Bass regulations.

Big Bass regulations involve a 15-inch minimum size restriction, with a four fish (combined species) creel limit. All other conventional regulations would remain in effect.

• The state's first catch-and-release bass fishery was proposed. A 4.2-mile section of Dunkard Creek, Greene County, from Shannon Run to the SR 2009 bridge, will be the site for the experimental program in 1995 if final approval is granted. Under the proposed regulations, only "no-kill" angling would be permitted for all bass species in that section.

The waters would be closely monitored for a five-year period to determine the program's effect on the fish population.

Public comment on the proposal is being solicited.

• The Commission approved guidelines for reviewing projects for implementation under the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Act of 1993.

• Commissioners endorsed prompt enactment of legislation that would clarify workers compensation rights for board members.

• Guidelines for handling requests for regulations and public comment periods were approved.

• A $1,000 grant to Photography by Michelson, Inc., for support of a video production on striped bass was awarded.

• Four trout refuge areas in Cameron County were eliminated. Because of a decline in the habitat from beaver activity, the areas were considered ineffective.

• A 1.2-mile section of Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County, from State Game Land 111 to Paddytown was approved as a delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only site. The regulations will go into place beginning January 1, 1995.

• A proposed creel limit for American shad in the Lehigh River gained tentative approval. If–after a public comment period–the measure is given final OK, only one fish per day could be creeled. The current creel limit is six.

The proposed regulation is designed to help boost the restoration of shad to the Lehigh basin in conjunction with the opening of fish passageways at dams on the river.

• The Commission also authorized the staff to take steps toward acquisition of two parcels of land. A 5.5-acre parcel in Wayne Twp., Erie County, and a 21.58-acre area along the Schuylkill River, Berks County, are under consideration.

The land in Erie County borders the Commission's Corry Fish Hatchery. The Wildlands Conservancy has made a verbal commitment to assist with the purchase of the land in Perry Twp., Berks County.–*Dan Tredinnick.*

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Cast and Caught



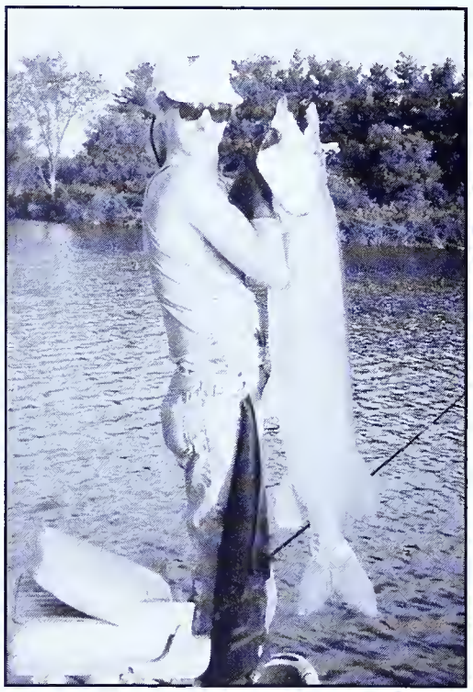
Frank Hettler, of Horsham, used a minnow to convince this chain pickerel to strike. The 26-inch fish was caught out of Tohickon Creek, Bucks County, last November.



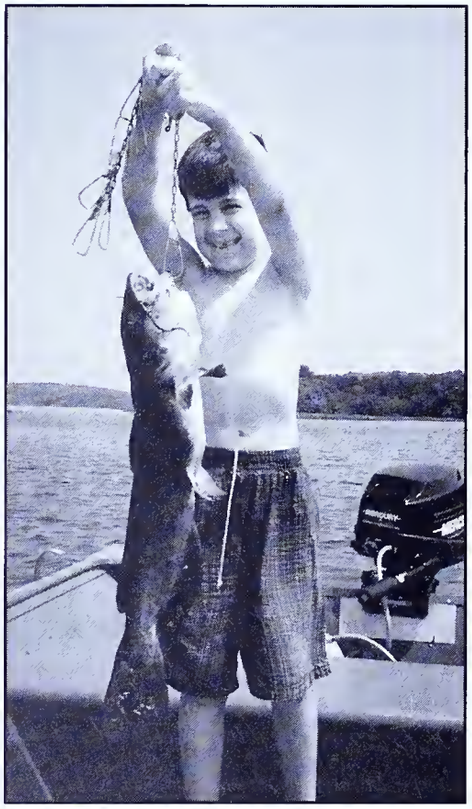
Newburg resident Curtis Carbaugh, age 12, caught this largemouth bass while fishing in a local pond. The fish weighed 2 pounds and measured 19 inches in length.



West Hazleton resident Tom Moro caught this largemouth bass while fishing on Briar Creek Lake, Columbia County. The fish, fooled by a surface lure, was 21 inches long and weighed 6 pounds.



Central City resident Dwight Shaffer hefts the muskellunge he caught and released while fishing last year. The 50-inch fish was one of many muskies Dwight has caught and released over the past few years. Great job, Dwight!



Charlie Bowen, of Middletown, used a minnow to fool this channel catfish. The seven-year-old angler was fishing on the Susquehanna River when he hooked the 27-inch, 6 1/2-pound fish. Nice going, Charlie!



Laureldale resident Kevin Long was fishing the Schuylkill River, Berks County, when this northern pike attacked his minnow. The fish was 35 1/2 inches long and weighed 11 pounds, 8 ounces.



Dan Valasek, of Freeport, shows off the brown trout he caught while jigging in Elk Creek, Erie County. The fish weighed 6 pounds, 3 ounces and was 23 inches long.



Scott McClure, Linglestown, shows the 17 1/2-inch brook trout he caught in Stony Creek, Dauphin County. Nice brookie, Scott!

Cast and Caught



Bronson Fox, of Elverson, was fishing in a friend's pond when this largemouth bass attacked his bait. The fish was 16 1/2 inches long. Nice fish, Bronson!



Scott Smullin, Hellertown, was fishing in Monocacy Creek near Bethlehem when he hooked this brown trout. The 19-inch fish was caught on a spinner.

FISHING LICENSE APPLICATION

PRINT PLAINLY (PFBC-L-118, Rev. 06-93)

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Attn: License Division
P.O. Box 67000
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000

DATE _____ FISHING LICENSE NO. _____
(Official Use, Issuing Agent Only)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

BIRTHDAY mo. _____ day _____ year _____ HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT _____

AGE _____ SEX _____ EYES _____ HAIR _____

OPTIONAL: *For survey purposes, what is your* ***HOME PHONE NUMBER****?* _____

Resident of Pennsylvania? ☐ Yes ☐ No

CHECK THE LICENSE DESIRED

- ☐ Resident $12.50
- ☐ Senior Resident..... 2.50
- ☐ Non-Resident..... 25.50
- ☐ 5-Day Tourist..... 20.50
  Valid from _____ to _____
- ☐ Trout/Salmon Stamp..... 5.50

Total..... $ _____

☐ *Resident Disabled War Veteran
Claim No. _____ Free
*Available only from County Treasurers

Applicant must establish identity, age, and the fact that he or she is a bona fide resident of this Commonwealth to the satisfaction of the issuing agent.
Type of ID _____
I certify the above to be a true and accurate statement.

_____
APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE

Cost of License and Trout/Salmon stamp includes 50 cent Issuing Agent Fee for each.

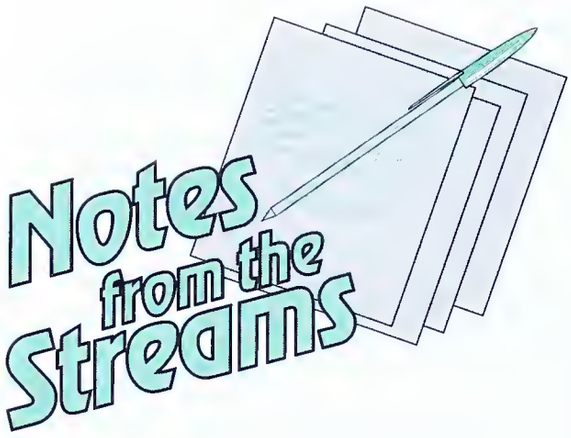
Agents Please Note: *Persons buying only a Trout/Salmon stamp or stamps are not required to complete this application.*

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1994 Fishing License Application

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Note: *Include a copy of your birth certificate or driver's license when you apply by mail for any kind of resident license.*



He came in through the hatch house window

On December 13, 1993, an unexpected visitor dropped into the Pleasant Gap Fish Culture Station. The visitor had four legs instead of two, and he came into the hatch house through the window and screen, instead of the door. The young button buck gave fish culturist Bob Peese quite a tussle when Bob tried to remove the deer from between the fiberglass troughs and lead him to the door. With the assistance of station manager Ken Fiedler and fisheries technician Mike Heitsenrether, the deer was finally carried out, but not before he ascended the stairs to the second floor, almost reaching the break room. The deer probably would have made it through the break room door, but Ken Fiedler grabbed him by the tail and pulled the other way.

Some people speculate that the deer was just trying to get to the Christmas tree, which was in the break room, but when he was released outside, the deer bounded away. Damage from the visit included one window, one screen, some clumps of deer hair in the hatching troughs, and a small trace of deer blood in various places. The deer appeared to be otherwise unhurt except for a cut on its leg and some cuts on its head.–*Bob Wilberding, Foreman, Pleasant Gap Fish Culture Station.*

Third time's a charm

Last summer, I pursued a boating-under-the-influence (BUI) offender who was later successfully prosecuted. In a discussion with Guy Bowersox, the WCO for Union/Snyder counties, I found that he had also taken action on the same person for multiple boating safety violations during that same season.

While assisting the Game Commission's patrol efforts near R.B. Winter State Park last December, I encountered the same person again. It was near midnight when I was flagged down by a lost, tired, alone, out-of-gas and nearly hypothermic snowmobiler. After a 25-mile ride back to his truck and bewildered comrades, I think he finally agreed that law enforcement officers really are "the good guys."–*Brian Burger, WCO, Centre County.*

Our disgrace

Litter is our national disgrace. Everyone discards nearly five pounds of trash per day, most of which is legally placed in permitted landfills. In Pennsylvania alone we generate almost 10 million tons of garbage a year. The few people who toss litter while they drive, park, boat or fish give us all a bad name.

We all know that litter is loathsome and expensive to clean up, but what are the alternatives and solutions? The first is very obvious: Don't litter! Keep that trash in your pocket, bag, car or boat. If you see litter in your immediate area, please pick it up. It's really not demeaning, degrading or humiliating to bend over and pocket some litter as you walk to or from your favorite fishing hole. Who knows–if you do it, maybe others who see you will, too.

Secondly, educate. It is common for me to patrol, checking licenses and conversing with people, while holding retrieved handfuls of twisted and tangled monofilament line. After being questioned about my actions, anglers usually say, "Wow, I never thought about doing that."

Take time to teach our children about litter. They, too, will use the resources we now enjoy.

Education and stewardship go hand in hand. Give the owner of the property on which you fish a helping hand picking up litter. The owner may reciprocate.

Another alternative is to organize and participate in a community, stream or road cleanup. The Fish and Boat Commission administers the "Adopt-a-Stream" program, in which you can ensure that a stretch of your preferred waterway remains clean and free of debris. PennDOT has a similar "Adopt-a-Highway" program.

Many materials that are collected can be recycled. Aluminum cans, plastic bottles, milk jugs and glass are probably the most popular items for recycling, and they are easily collected. Some monofilament line manufacturers accept waste mono line and remove this silent killer from the environment by recycling.

Lastly, a very strong option of litter control is enforcement. The Fish and Boat Code enables waterways conservation officers and their deputies to levy a $25 fine, plus $10 per item dumped, by citing any person who litters near Commonwealth waters. In certain cases, this could include a jail term. The Code also provides a more costly penalty for disposal of household trash, usually illegally discarded in bags, boxes or containers.

If you see (or have seen) this type of activity taking place, note the date, time, location, material dumped and any identification of vehicles (color, type, license plate numbers, etc.) and/or persons. Then contact your WCO, DWCO or local or state police agency for enforcement action. However, you may possibly be needed to testify at a hearing.

It is everybody's responsibility to stop the litterbug, because somehow, directly or indirectly, the litterbug affects all of us.–*DWCO Don Benczkowski.*

Are you serious?

While checking anglers on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River one day last summer, I approached an angler who was packing his equipment in his vehicle. I inquired how his luck had been. "Not too good. I only caught two small perch," he said. I agreed with him about his luck, and our conversation continued for several more minutes. As I turned to leave, he asked this final question, "How long does it take for a perch to grow into a walleye?" I paused for a moment, and then replied with a smile, "The same amount of time it takes for a whitetail deer to grow into an elk!"–*Warren Singer, WCO, Bradford and Sullivan counties.*

Progressive bass anglers

While at a meeting of the Nittany Bassmasters, I was pleasantly surprised to find that all but one club member had previously viewed *Judgement on the Water*, the boating safety video I was about to present. I was informed that their club requires all members to obtain certification through attendance at a Commission basic boating safety course. This not only shows the success of the Commission's boating safety education efforts, but it speaks well of the positive attitude of a responsible organization.–*Brian Burger, WCO, Centre County.*

Keeping it clean

DWCO Tony Winters has adopted a 10.5-mile section of Route 6 in Pike County. On a day off, I went with DWCO Winters to do some litter clean-up. We were sifting through some discarded boxes of household refuse looking for information that might lead to a prosecution when Tony

said, "Hey, look at this," and pointed toward the road.

As I came up the bank, I saw a pick-up truek parked beside one of our trash piles. There was a woman at the rear of the truek taking old tires out of her vehiele and staeking them with our eolleeted trash. In the bed of the truek were various other items–including an old mierowave oven–all meant to join the tires on the pile.

Deputy Winters approaehed the would-be litterbug, showed her his badge and introdueed himself as a DWCO. After giving us her reasons for dumping the trash, she settled her violation on a field aeknowledgement of guilt. While DWCO Winters eompleted the neeessary doeumentation, I loaded the trash baek on her truek.

After we went baek to the disearded trash we had been working on, we loeated a name and address of the person responsible for the litter. After backtraeking the address through the post offiee, we loeated the residenee. We also had a tip that the items had been tossed out of a U-Haul truek seen at the site the previous weekend.

When I arrived at the address, I was met outside by a man and woman. I introdueed myself and tried the most direet approaeh: "Who was driving the U-Haul last weekend when you dumped all the trash over the side of the highway?" To my surprise, the man happily replied, "That was me!" Of eourse, he was not so happy when I informed him of the fines he would have to pay. And they, too, had an exeuse: "We though it was a landfill."

In faet, they elaimed that the woman DWCO Winters had eited previously told them they eould leave the trash there. When I informed them that it was not her property and that she had also been fined, they opted to settle their fines with the Fish and Boat Commission. Along with the monetary settlement, they were required to piek up all the trash they had dumped–and I am pleased to say that they have done so.

The "Adopt-a-Highway" projeet is alive and well in this distriet, even if it does take three tries to get the same spot cleaned up!–*WCO William Carey, Pike County.*

Rare treat

While attending annual training at the H. R. Staekhouse Sehool of Waterways Conservation and Watereraft Safety, my fellow offieers and I were treated to a sight most people see only on television.

While outside on our luneh break, we heard a sereech from far above Spring Creek. Looking up, we were thrilled to see a mature bald eagle lazily soaring overhead. Suddenly, from above and behind the eagle, we spotted an osprey preparing to attaek. The eagle apparently sensed the attaeker and rolled on its baek just as the osprey elosed in. The osprey darted away in the niek of time as the eagle eontinued its barrel roll.

The aerial show eontinued for nearly 20 minutes before the birds flew out of sight. We counted a total of four ospreys ehasing and diving at the tormented eagle.

Maybe the osprey had plans to keep all the trout at the nearby Bellefonte Fish Culture Station for themselves, but I think the hatehery workers have other ideas.–*WCO William Carey, Pike County.*

Excuses, excuses

Commission law enforcement personnel often hear various reasons why an angler or boater has broken the law. These are a few of the exeuses told to Northeast Region deputy waterways eonservation offieers.

Why did the angler keep a largemouth bass during the closed season?

"I hooked it deep. I was told you only have to release them if they were hooked in the lip."

Why were the two New Jersey men trout fishing without licenses or trout stamps?

"We had only $200 between us, and we spent $190 on all this new equipment. We needed the rest of the money for gas to get home."

Why was a man from West Virginia fishing without a license and harassing other anglers at Lake Wallenpaupack?

"I'm a traveling salesman." (He was attempting to sell his homemade lures to other anglers.)

Why were two unlicensed anglers fishing from a rowboat on Lake Wallenpaupack?

"Why aren't you arresting the real violators with the big boats?"

The comment from the young man who drove his four-wheel-drive truck over the grass at an access, doing quite a bit of damage in the process.

"Oh, you saw that."

The rationale used by the unlicensed woman on the dock who was casting and retrieving (and even catching some fish).

"This is my husband's pole–he has a lieense."

An angler's answer when asked his date of birth.

"What did I put on there?" (He was eited for fishing with a borrowed license.)

Why three unlicensed men were fishing in a lake 1 1/4 miles from the nearest road.

"We were just out for a hike–we didn't intend to go fishing."

Why were two men fishing without licenses on Labor Day?

"Sinee when do you guys work on holidays?"

Why the unlicensed angler ran into the woods with his fishing pole after seeing a uniformed deputy. (He was found over an hour later, hiding in a pile of leaves.)

"I'm not fishing. See, no pole."

Why was the properly licensed fisherman using three poles? (Two poles had live bait, the third was rigged with a lure.)

"I was just cheeking the aetion of the lure."

The reason an 18-year-old woman had tossed her beer can in the woods.

"I was going to piek it up tomorrow, I reeyele, you know." (Her parents didn't buy that exeuse, either.)

Why, on the opening day of trout season, an angler had a six-inch native brook trout in his creel.

"That was the first fish I eaught this morning. Everyone knows it's bad luek to throw baek your first fish."

Why the fisherman dammed up a small pool in the stream beside him and had just put his eleventh trout in the pool.

"I'm only going to keep the eight biggest ones."

The reason an angler had 10 trout on his stringer.

"I believe in eateh and release–I'm going to let them all go later."

Why were two ice fishermen (who had already set up five tip-ups each) also using jigging rods equipped with teardrop spoons and mousies?

"We're just ehecking the depth."

The excuse given by two local ice fishermen who were using five tip-ups and a jigging rod each.

"That's right, we're in Pennsylvania. We thought we were in New York."

Why did the two ice fishermen have 11 tip-ups set out?

"We always bring a spare in case one breaks. It's right here in the box...Oops!" –*WCO William Carey, Pike County.*

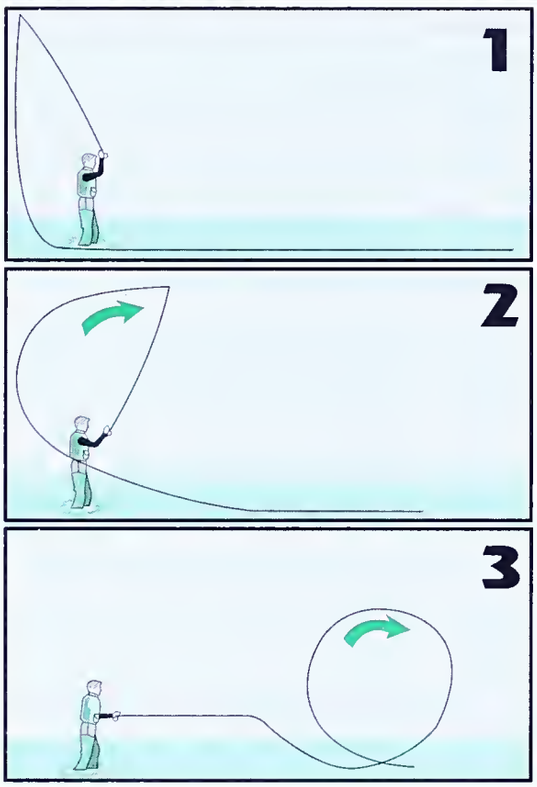
Conservation Officers of PA Publishes *Best of the Field*

What's sure to be welcome news to *PA Angler* readers is that a hardcover 275-page collection of *Angler* "Notes from the Streams" and *PA Game News* "Field Notes" is now available. The Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania, an organization of Fish & Boat Commission and Game Commission officers, has published *Best of the Field*, a collection of the most interesting and humorous "Notes from the Streams" and "Field Notes" that have appeared in *Game News* since 1932 and in *PA Angler* since 1931.

Copies cost $11.95 plus 6 percent sales tax and $1.95 for shipping and handling.

To order *Best of the Field*, send a check or money order to: Conservation Officers of PA, P.O. Box 3304, Williamsport, PA 17701.

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



While double-hauling a fly line 90 feet is fun, it is not practical on most Pennsylvania streams. The roll cast is the most important cast you can learn, and you should practice until you can execute this cast in many circumstances. Learn to roll cast backhanded, in the wind, with weighted flies and with trees at your back. There are many times when the roll cast is your only option.

A shock-butt leader can often help when fishing with very fine tippets and small flies. This leader should be tied to your fly line at one end and your monofilament leader at the other. It acts much like a rubber band and can help keep you from breaking your tippet while setting the hook.

Trout feed most often on sub-surface insects. Therefore, you should concentrate the majority of your efforts on fishing flies and lures near the bottom of a stream. If you do not occasionally hang up, or feel the fly "ticking" along the bottom of the stream, you are probably not fishing deep enough.

Felt soles on your waders can improve your traction on slippery stream bottoms. Sometimes, however, this is not enough to keep you from slipping and sliding on dangerously slick rocks. Chains that strap to your wader boots are available from many suppliers and act much like the chains you put on your tires in the winter. Another option is to use aluminum screws, and actually screw a few of these into the soles of your wader boots.

Many fly tiers have a problem with crowding the front of the hook with material, only to find that they do not have enough room left to finish the fly. A simple rule of thumb to remember is to stop the body of the fly at the two-thirds point on the hook shank. This will give your flies the proper proportions most every time, and should allow you plenty of room to finish the fly without covering the eye of the hook with thread.

When casting to rising fish, make sure to cast well upstream of where you see the rise. The circle on the water made by the fish moves with the current, and the fish is often farther upstream than where you actually see the ring. Give the fish plenty of time to see the fly and to react, because your quarry might float with the fly for a time before taking.

Illustration- Ted Walke

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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SMART Angler's Notebook

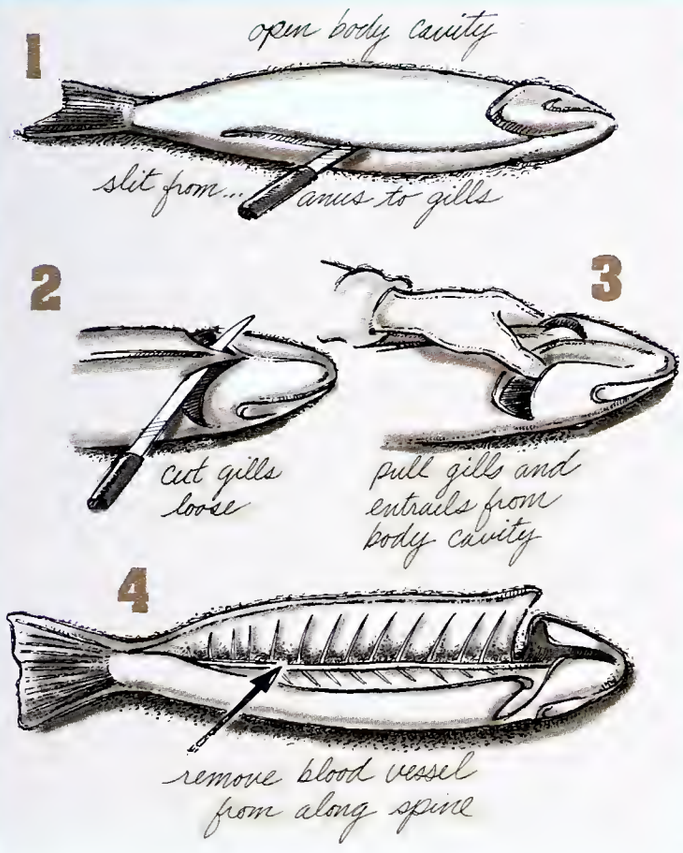
by Carl Richardson

Care of the Catch: Trout for the Skillet

There is no better way to end a day of trout fishing than to enjoy a baked or pan-fried trout. Catch and release is OK, but it doesn't do much to fill the stomach. Remember that there is nothing wrong with killing a few fish for a meal or two. Remember also to take only what you know you'll use and return the rest unharmed.

To ensure the flavor of trout, take care of each fish intended for the skillet right away. Either kill the fish immediately or try to keep it alive. To kill the fish, give it a knock on the head, right behind the eyes. Use pliers or a knife handle. Prepare the trout for home by field-dressing it or putting it on ice. Field-dress fish by cutting from the anal vent to the throat, removing the entrails. Wash the body cavity out and put it on ice. There is no need to scale because trout have small scales. Remove the head and tail at home or at camp.

Dressing



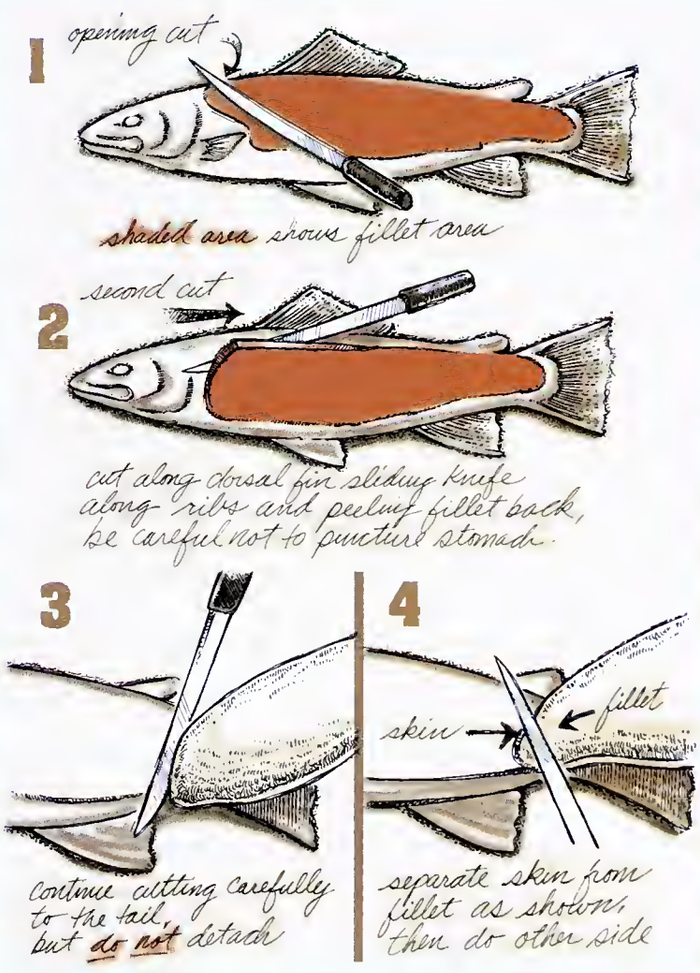
Large field-dressed trout can also be steaked. Just cut down through the body. Make the cuts at one-inch to two-inch intervals.

Trout not prepared within a couple of days should be frozen. Place the fillets or fish in a plastic container and freeze. Filling the container with water helps some. Fillets in plastic bags don't keep as long. Mark them with the date and species name.

Trout can be kept alive by placing them in a bucket of water or on a stringer until they can be filleted or field-dressed. Trout on a stringer will die quickly and some flavor will be lost. Killing and cleaning the fish right away is more humane and protects the quality of the meat.

Fillet larger trout by making a cut along the back, near the dorsal fin. Cut the length of the trout, working toward the tail and belly. Don't cut into the belly. Let the rib bones guide the knife blade–you get the fullest fillets that way. At the tail, don't cut the fillet off. Guide the knife blade between the skin and flesh. Flip the fish over and repeat. Red meat around the lateral line can be removed from each fillet.

Filleting



The Law

PA law requires that you keep the head and tail on fish with a minimum size, like trout. These species may be field-dressed. Other species may be filleted in the field, but the skin must remain on the fillet. This provision lets a waterways conservation officer or other official identify the fish species.

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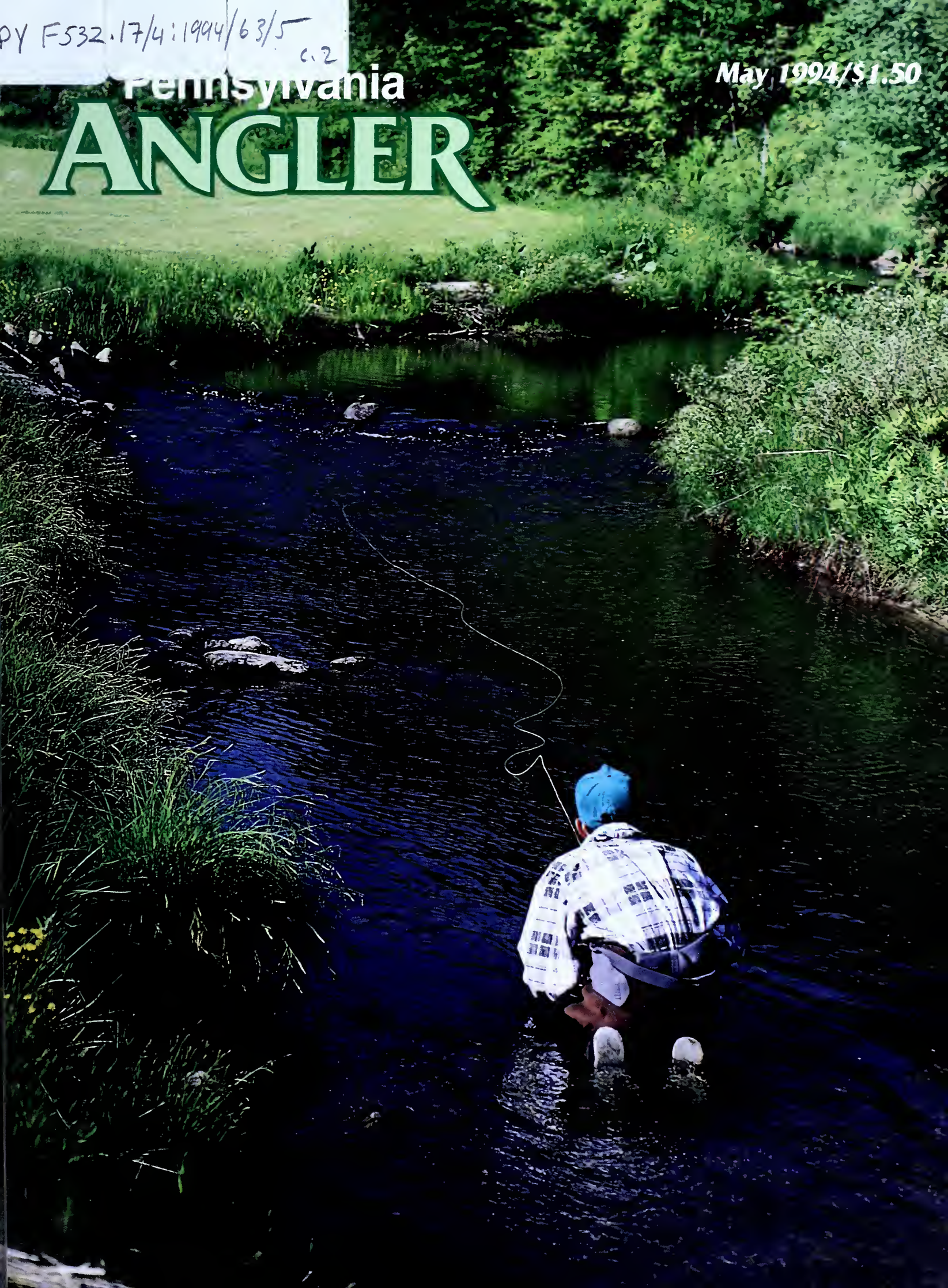


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May 1994/$1.50



Straight Talk

Trout Fishing: A New Look



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

At our January 1994 meeting, the Commissioners voted in favor of introducing proposed changes to trout regulations for the 1995 season. The proposals stem from responses from a statewide trout angler survey, internal surveys, field studies and results of the Commission's strategic planning. Because a large number of the changes affect many categories of anglers and involve many special regulation trout waters, the Commissioners extended the public comment period regarding these changes until a vote is taken at the July Commission meeting.

In keeping with the Commission's effort to simplify regulations and increase the number of fishing opportunities throughout the state, the staff proposed specific changes to reduce the number of special regulations programs by one but not the number of waters under special regulations. Because of the diversity of these programs and regulations, the changes have generated considerable interest. Here are the major proposed changes:

- There will be no reduction in the number of waters (86) currently under special trout fishing regulations.
- The types of special regulation waters will be reduced from seven to six.
- Six additional months of catch-and-release fishing will be available on the 55 delayed-harvest waters.
- The current number of areas regulated for fly fishing only will be reduced by five waters as these waters are moved into the artificial-lures-only programs.

The intent of making these changes is to consolidate the special regulations programs, continue protection afforded to wild trout populations, and extend catch-and-release fishing opportunities by using stocked trout in the fall season.

These proposals are intended to improve the Commission's management of wild trout populations closer to the potential of individual waters while providing diverse trout angling across the Commonwealth. During the fall, winter and spring seasons, along with managing waters for natural reproduction, the Commission will continue to advocate a significant statewide catchable trout stocking program and maintain a discrete program for dedicated fly fishing enthusiasts. Most waters now under flies-only regulations will remain under flies-only regulations.

The Commission has the benefit of 10 years of special program assessment, and perhaps it is time to phase out the fly-fishing-only program and move these waters into other categories. In most cases the stocked trout waters in this program would simply move to delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only, which would promote catch-and-release angling.

Some Class A wild trout waters that were grandfathered into fly-fishing-only would be moved into other programs designed for wild trout management. These new programs, Heritage Trout and Selective Harvest, would allow for inclusion of a few very important special waters that don't fit into the description of Limestone Springs. Waters such as Slate Run, Letort Spring Run, Cross Fork Creek, Butternut Creek, Right Branch Young Woman's Creek, Lyman Run, a section of Gray's Run and Codorus Creek could fall into one of these categories. Other waters could be included in the catch-and-release program. The Little Lehigh Creek is a possibility.

For trout anglers who enjoy fishing stocked lakes and reservoirs, the Commission is also considering extending the trout season through March. This change would allow for more angling on stocked trout waters that are normally closed. It would also allow for the angler who is interested in catching yellow perch, crappies and bluegills to wet a line in early spring.

The changes are only a few of the proposals under consideration. Additional details on the programs and streams that could be affected are available on request from the PA Fish & Boat Commission Division of Fisheries Management, 450 Robinson Lane, Bellefonte, PA 16823-9620. Your views are essential as we continue to examine more innovative ways to consolidate regulations to make fishing more enjoyable while improving the management of our abundant trout fishery. Tell us what you think!

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PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

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SMART Angler's Notebook *by Carl Richardson*
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This issue's front cover, by Barry & Cathy Beck, shows an angler stalking a trout on a northcentral Pennsylvania stream.

Getting to know a waterway

Read the articles in this issue by Mike Bleech, Darl Black, Walt Young, Charlie Meck and John McGonigle, and you realize how well these guys know certain waterways. Still, no matter how well we think we know a waterway, there's always more we don't know, and there are many waterways we'd like to know well. Waterways are always changing, too. From one season to the next, in our rivers, for instance, logs, debris and rushing water can erase holes and create new ones. In fact, the contour could change several times in one season.

And everyone wants maps. The Commission hasn't printed fishing maps in years because some of the information changes so fast that printed maps would be outdated almost as quickly as they're published.

If there were a "perfect publication" that helped you get to know a waterway, what would it include? Would it have a map? What would it show? What information do you need most? Please let me know.

Luckily for us, getting to know only one waterway takes at least one lifetime.

–Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.

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DOCUMENTS SECTION

OPERATION

"Sharing the Resource"

by Larry Hoffman

In January 1993, the Commission initiated a new program called "Operation Sharing the Resource." The program is co-chaired by Commissioner Paul J. Mahon and Jim Young, Director of the Bureau of Property and Facilities Management. The program is intended to establish an informal partnership among the Commission, interested individuals, sportsmen's clubs, municipalities, and other organizations desiring to develop access to Pennsylvania's waterways to improve fishing and boating opportunities for disabled persons. The Commission will provide technical guidance and advice, and the sponsoring individuals or groups will provide the labor, materials, equipment and financial support to develop a project.

The Commission will provide specific guidelines for evaluating and designing accessible fishing and boating sites in Pennsylvania. Consideration will be given to planning for improved accessibility, levels of accessibility, and evaluation and design aids. Priority will be given to improving current facilities and selection, design and development of new sites.

Improved accessibility includes fishing accessibility concepts and site evaluation and design procedures. Fishing accessibility concepts identify areas and facilities that offer fishing and boating opportunities. These areas and facilities range from large to small, urban to rural, and developed areas to rustic sites. To improve and provide opportunities, special consideration is given to the variety of disabling conditions. Sites are developed to address levels of accessibility–nothing more than a rating system that considers the variations in site conditions and resource availability to define the degree of difficulty and the range of opportunities for disabled persons. The goal is to provide a full range of recreation at fishing and boating sites. The inclusion of disabled persons who are actually going to use a site in the evaluation, planning and design process should ensure a successful venture.

Information is provided to guide interested organizations and individuals who are not experienced in planning or design. The evaluation process includes the tentative area selection, an overview evaluation of the entire area, a detailed site selection using specific guidelines to formulate solutions, and a review of the evaluation process resulting in a clearly defined level of difficulty.



photos-Art Michaels

Jake Myers: "In 1988, the Women's Club of Ephrata 'adopted' Cocalico Creek through the Commission's Adopt-a-Stream program. Rip-rap was placed, 'clean-the-creek days' were organized, and three handicapped fishing platforms were placed along the creek."



Outstanding Community Effort

In 1988, the Women's Club of Ephrata "adopted" Cocalico Creek through the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Adopt-a-Stream (AAS) program. Karl Lutz, our area AAS coordinator, encouraged us to create "clean the creek" days and place rip-rap along the stream banks to help stabilize them. In addition, we placed three handicapped fishing platforms along the creek. Waterways Conservation Officer K. Derek Pritts designed the platforms. The project was led by Peg Myers, past president of the Women's Club of Ephrata.

Several local organizations sponsored the building of the platforms. The first platform was underwritten by Gebhart Brothers Lumber of Ephrata, the second by two local dentists, Drs. Ron Good and Harold Herr, and the third by the Ephrata Veterans of Foreign Wars. The platforms were built by local carpenters and by Michael Jones, Troop 252, for his Eagle Scout project. The paving was donated by Burkholder Paving.

We held our first handicapped fishing derby on June 5, 1993–free fishing day. Anglers were required to fill out an application to notify us of any special needs they might have.

The Lititz Sportsmen's Club placed nets in the creek and stocked fish to guarantee our participants a good day of fishing. The Women's Club of Ephrata supplied fishing rods and bait. Some of the fish were cleaned and placed on ice so that the anglers could take them home.

The Amvets of Ephrata provided lunch for everyone, and our club had prizes for the participants. I'd like to point out that all these gifts were donated–we have a very caring town. The mayor of Ephrata proclaimed June 5, 1993, as Handicapped Fishing Day.–*Jake Myers, Ephrata, PA.*

OPERATION "Sharing the Resource"

The design process works in accordance with a plan that identifies who is responsible, coordination required, permits needed, classification of the level of accessibility, resources required, design and construction sketches, construction schedule, and evaluation of use.

A key in providing access for disabled persons is to define levels of accessibility clearly to ensure that a disabled person's expectations and on-site experiences coincide. Items such as slope of paths and ramps, surface materials and safety features should receive careful attention. Planning and design solutions should be sensitive to the aesthetic and recreational qualities that attract people to a particular site. Consideration should be given to the varying needs of disabled persons impaired because of mobility, vision, manual agility, stamina and learning disabilities.



To accommodate such a variety of disabled persons, three levels of accessibility should be addressed:

• **Level A, Accessible.** These sites have accessible parking with curb cuts, if applicable. Constructed ramps and paths have firm to hard surfaces. Ramp/pathway slopes are no greater than a 1:12 ratio and may require a railing or edge. On long ramps/pathways, a wide, flat rest area should be provided. Hazardous locations are marked and protected by railings. Fishing stations may have curbs, railings or bumpers for safety reasons. Toilets are fully accessible. Signs are visible at appropriate locations. The site is usable without assistance by all but the most severely disabled.

• **Level B, Usable.** Accessibility standards are reduced and present a greater challenge to disabled persons. These sites may include a manmade parking area, road, ramp, path and dock. Slopes are equal to or greater than a 1:12 ratio leading to productive fishing sites. Pathway surfaces may be grass-covered, not very rocky, and consist of natural or manmade compacted materials. Pathway edges may be marked but railings are limited only to dangerous areas. Fishing stations may only have curbs. Toilets are recommended. Signs are present. A disabled user may require a companion to assist when using this area.



• **Level C, Difficult.** Fewer facilities are available while providing a more challenging experience. Paths are steeper and more natural, but compact and smooth. Fishing stations may have curbs. Toilets are recommended. Signs may not be present. Persons using this area require assistance.

Currently, 10 projects are under consideration and in various stages of development. Fishing sites/piers are proposed along Big Spring, Newville; Allegheny River, Tarentum; Tobyhanna Creek, Tobyhanna; Juniata River, Tyrone; Raystown Lake, Huntingdon; Loyalsock Creek, Williamsport; Fords Pond, Shuitsville; Roaring Brook, Moscow; Lake Scranton, Scranton; and Lackawanna State Park Lake, Wallsville.

WCO Kim Pritts: WCO Pritts designed the handicapped fishing platforms along Cocalico Creek, northern Lancaster County.

Jake & Peg Myers: Ephrata's project leaders. All project equipment, supplies, platform components and labor were donated.

Complementing the Commission's overall effort is the recently formed Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Disabled Sportspersons Advisory Group, consisting of private citizens who are knowledgeable in fishing and boating activities with varying backgrounds and degrees of disabilities, a Commissioner, and several staff members. The group's role is to advise on matters relating to accessibility at Commission-owned facilities. Thus, additional emphasis is given to developing and providing expanded access to fishing and boating programs throughout the Commonwealth.

Please promote the development of accessible fishing and boating areas throughout the Commonwealth for persons with varying degrees of disabilities. Your contribution of barrier-free facilities for fishing and boating is one of the greatest needs for disabled sportsmen. Interested persons, sportsmen's clubs, civic groups, municipalities, and other organizations can receive assistance by contacting the nearest Fish and Boat Commission regional law enforcement office or the Commission's Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator at (717) 657-4546, or (814) 359-5155.

photos-Art Michaels

It's Caddis Time!

by Charles R. Meck



I arrived on the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning in early May. The last hendrickson hatch had ended just a few days before. It would be another two weeks before the sulphur hatch appeared. Many anglers think that there's an interval of almost three weeks, usually from the latter part of April until mid-May, until the next mayfly emerges. What do I do now?

Don't give up too quickly. The First Fork and plenty of other Keystone State trout waters hold some great caddisfly hatches in early May. I call the first two weeks of May "caddisfly time," because on many of our better trout waters you're more likely to witness hatches of these downwings than see a mayfly hatch.

Why do we call these aquatic insects *downwings*? When at rest the wings of the adult caddis fold back over the body in contrast to the upright wings of the mayfly. Any angler who has fished these hatches can tell you that it's important to copy the wing configuration of the caddis. Upright wings usually won't work when a caddisfly or stonefly hatch appears.

Larvae of caddisflies live underwater for a year. Many of these larvae live in protective cases made of materials specific for each group of caddisflies. Some common species in Pennsylvania build homes of sticks–others of stones. Some common green caddis species live in the larval stage with no protective case. Unlike mayflies, caddisflies have a complete life cycle. Before emerging as adults, these insects enter a resting or pupal stage, absent in mayflies. At the end of the pupal stage, caddisflies ascend to the surface to emerge. As they do they become prey for feeding trout.

But, you say, caddisfly hatches don't really affect me because few streams in my area contain any great numbers of these insects. Wrong! Dozens of trout streams throughout the state hold good downwing hatches in early May. If you don't believe me check the partial list of streams included in the chart. One productive trout water, the Little Juniata River in central Pennsylvania, holds a good green caddis hatch in early May.

For 10 years Fred Templin and I headed to fly fish on the Little Juniata River on May 5. That river holds few early season mayfly hatches. The sulphur produces the first heavy hatch you can expect to see, but that was still another week away. Fred and I arrived at the river shortly after noon. I scanned the surface for any sign of activity and saw only a few orange craneflies dancing in the riffle and several caddisflies returning to the surface to lay eggs. Shortly after we geared up, caddisflies

In more than 500 casts during that particular experiment, I caught twice as many trout on the pattern I twitched than I did on the one using a dead drift.

It's Caddis Time!

began to emerge in the riffle in front of us. Several trout chased the emerging pupae right to the surface with telltale splashing rises.

I finally captured one of the downwings and examined it closely. It had medium-brown wings, no tail, tan legs and a grayish-green body. Fred and I both tied on a size 14 Green Caddis and cast to feeding trout barely 10 feet in front of us. On several occasions trout refused the pattern until we either sank the pattern a few inches underneath the surface or twitched the dry fly. Trout took the Green Caddis all afternoon long on that day when we didn't expect to see any hatch. When the surface activity died down, we tied on an emerging pupa pattern, fished it just under the surface and continued to catch trout. Within the past few years populations of green caddises have declined on the river.

Caddis hatches can appear anytime from early March through November, but many important hatches appear from mid-April through mid-May. Most often during that time you find caddisflies typically with body colors of cream, tan, black or green. Anglers call many of the black-bodied caddises grannoms. These range in size from a 10 on Penns Creek to a size 16 on Sugar Creek.

Sugar Creek in Venango and Crawford counties holds one of the best early season caddis hatches in the state. Jack Busch of Erie first showed me that heavy hatch in late April several years ago. We arrived on Sugar just above Bradleytown early in the morning on April 24. Jack showed me thousands of adult grannoms that had emerged during previous days and now covered some of the branches near the stream. For several hours we waited until either caddis adults emerged or mated females headed back to the stream to lay eggs.

Not until mid-afternoon did any action occur. Thousands of caddises began emerging around 3 p.m. and riffles that just minutes before seemed void of trout now became active with trout chasing emerging caddises. In an hour Jack and I landed and released more than a dozen trout on a size 16 Black Caddis.

One of the most spectacular early season caddis hatches occurs on Pine Creek in northcentral Pennsylvania. It usually begins around May 1 and continues for more than a week. Locals call the hatch the "green egg sac caddis." Others refer to it as the cream caddis. Tom Finkbiner of Slate Run has fished the hatch for many years and thinks the hatch now is not quite as heavy as it used to be. Tom suggests a soft-hackle emerger in the morning during the hatch, and a dancer or dry fly pattern in the evening when the egg-laying adults come back to the water. For his dancer or high-water pattern, Tom ties on a ginger tail and a body of all ginger hackle. Tom says that skittering or dancing the pattern often drives the trout into striking it.

For his standard or low-water pattern, he ties a light-tan body and cream hackle on a size 14 dry fly hook.

Tactics

When fishing caddisfly hatches remember these two tactics—movement and depth. Movement refers to twitching or skit-



photos-Charles R. Meck

tering the dry fly and twitching the emerging pupa. Depth refers to where you're fishing the pattern. If trout refuse your dry fly pattern, then sink it just under the surface. If that doesn't work, try an emerging pattern. Let's examine both tactics in more detail.

Several years ago I fished a grannom hatch on Spruce Creek in late April. I cast over a half dozen rising trout and had nothing to show for it—all refused the dry fly. In a fit of frustration I lifted my rod tip and moved the downwing across and in front of a rising trout in a skittering motion. At the first movement a brown trout took the pattern. Within a half-hour, six more trout took that moving pattern. Don't overlook this method, especially if trout have refused a drag-free float.

While fishing the green caddis on the Little Juniata River one day, I varied the movement of the submerged emerging pupa pattern. I tied on a soft-hackle wet fly and alternated retrieves fishing one with a dead drift and the next with a twitch or jerking motion. In more than 500 casts during that particular experiment, I caught twice as many trout on the pattern I twitched than I did on the one using a dead drift. Vary the movement of wet and dry flies when you fish caddis hatches.

As with movement, depth also plays an important part in fishing a caddis hatch. Unlike mayflies, adult caddisflies usually escape from the surface rapidly. Because of this quick getaway, trout often shun the freshly emerged adult and prefer to chase the underwater emerging caddises. Trout will take the dry fly, especially when the adult female comes back to the surface to lay eggs. But trout often seem to prefer an underwater pattern.

"The bi-cycle is the best way to fish the emerger," says Tom Finkbiner. Tom should know because he's been helping anglers catch trout on Pine Creek during the cream caddis hatch for years.

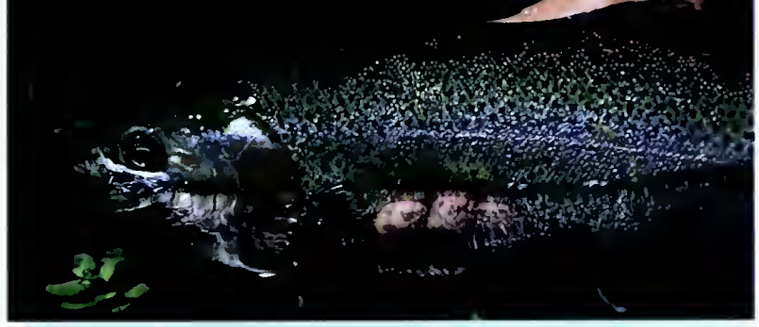
What is the bi-cycle? Western anglers have used this method for years. With the bi-cycle you use a dry fly, then attach a tippet to the bend of the hook of that pattern. I usually prefer a 2-foot to 3-foot piece of tippet material, depending on the velocity and depth of the water. Tie the wet fly pattern on the end of the tippet that is attached to the dry fly. I prefer to add a bit of weight to the emerger pattern when I tie it to keep it under the surface.

When you're fishing a cream caddis hatch, you can then use a high-floating dry fly caddis and attach a cream caddis emerger to the tippet. With this method you cover trout coming to the surface and those feeding just under the surface. With just a few minutes of practice, you'll find it easy to cast the two flies at one time.

Patterns

Even if you're a dedicated dry fly angler, you should consider using wet flies during a caddis hatch. I indicated earlier that caddisfly adults escape rapidly from the surface, and often trout chase emerging caddises underwater. When fishing caddis hatches, take soft-hackle wet flies in sizes 12 and 14 with body colors of cream, tan, green and black with you on all those early season trips. I often add several wraps of .015 lead wire to the body when I'm tying the fly. Grouse feathers work well for the hackle of these wet flies.

I tie several patterns to copy adult mayflies. Tie some of the patterns as fluttering caddises with poly bodies, medium-brown elk or deer hair for the downwings and tan hackle. This added hackle helps the pattern float well in the fast water where caddises emerge.



Some streams with early season caddisfly hatches

Codorus–tan caddis
Yellow Breeches–tan caddis
Penns Creek–grannom
Fishing Creek–grannom
Spruce Creek–grannom
Little Juniata River–green caddis
First Fork of the Sinnemahoning–cream caddis
Driftwood Branch of the Sinnemahoning–cream caddis
Pine Creek–cream caddis
Bowman Creek–grannom
Sugar Creek–grannom
Yellow Creek–green caddis
Oil Creek–grannom and green caddis
Spring Creek–green caddis
Little Pine Creek–grannom
French Creek–black, tan, olive and brown caddis
Tulpehocken Creek–green caddis
Little Schuylkill River–gray, green and brown caddis
Young Woman's Creek–tan caddis
Brodhead Creek–tan caddis–*CM*.

Tom Finkbiner suggest a second kind of dry fly pattern he calls a "dancer" to copy skittering or egg-laying caddisflies. For the cream caddis on Pine Creek he ties these patterns with a short ginger tail and a body of ginger hackle tied on a size 16 short-shank hook. He prefers this all-hackle body or spider-type pattern because anglers can skate it across the surface.

Many anglers prefer another kind of floating caddis pattern. They dub a poly body and then palmer a hackle over the body. The Henryville became a famous pattern with this kind of body. Some anglers prefer lower-riding patterns and omit the hackle altogether. Using this last kind of downwing without any hackle allows you to sink the pattern, if necessary, just under the surface.

Shucks have grown in importance recently in fly fishing. They copy nymphal or pupal cases still attached to the mayfly or caddisfly. Fly fishers add these to many mayfly patterns. More recently some fly tiers have begun to add them to their caddisfly patterns. If you include a shuck on some of your caddisfly patterns, you have an added bonus: The shuck, extending back over the bend of the hook, acts as a tail and gives the fly more ballast. I tie most of these shucks with a pale-tan Z-lon.

It's now early May. Have you seen the last of the hendricksons, quill gordons and black quills until next year? You say you can't wait until sulphurs and march browns appear in another three weeks? Then go fly fish one of the state's great trout waters like Pine or Sugar Creek that hold hatches of moth-like downwings called the caddisflies in late April and early May. If you're willing to alter your fly fishing methods and try a few new patterns, you might experience the fishing trip of a lifetime.

Best Available Cover For PIKE

by Mike Bleech





Live minnows (above) are the best pike bait. The "stick & move" method is best for working a minnow in the best available cover for pike. Don't waste time in one place. Move the bait often from one spot to another. Use a fine-wire wide-gap hook in sizes 4 to 1/0, a foot-long 17-pound-test mono leader, a swivel, a splitshot, and an adjustable in-line float. The hook gap should be wider than the thickness of the minnow. The splitshot should be large enough just to keep the minnow down.

photos-Mike Bleech

The best pike spots I have found in the Allegheny Reservoir were tangles of two or three trees. Some of the best were so freshly fallen that they still had green leaves.

A calm weekday morning at Glendale Lake is disturbed only by the churning blade of a spinnerbait. The easiest way to offer a lure to the fish in a dense weed bed is over the top of the weeds, on the surface of the water. *Plip, plip, ploop, plip, ploop, plip, plip...* Then the lure disappears in a swirl. When I set the hook, a 5-pound northern pike thrashes briefly, then launches itself skyward, where its thrashing loosens the hook from its jaw and sends the lure right back at me.

I am well practiced at doing the "pike duck." Once in Canada a pike threw a heavy spoon at me and the hook stuck into my skull. A pike in Conewango Creek once gave me a Rapala earring. But the point of this story is not how to survive doing battle with these toothy fish, though I could tell you more tales about battles I not only lost, but got battered. Instead, the point is how to locate and catch them.

Pike are cover-oriented hunters. They like to strike out at their prey from some kind of cover. Learning the kinds of cover pike use is an important step in catching them. This is a general rule, and like all general rules in fishing that I know about, there are exceptions. Yet, as general rules go, this is one that most often holds true.

Weeds are the classic pike cover, as in the opening example at Glendale Lake. A pike's green color is perfectly suited to life in the weeds. Most pike waters have abundant aquatic weed growth. As a matter of fact, many lakes have such vast weed beds that finding which weeds the pike like best can be confusing.

One key to determining the better weeds is depth. Clear Lake is a small, shallow impoundment in Crawford County that is loaded with pike, largemouth bass and panfish. Pike are the dominant fish. We learned which weeds the pike prefer by learning which weeds held the bass. Searching for bass, starting in the deepest water in the lake, all we could catch were pike. We worked farther and farther from the deeper water. Finally we found the bass in water less than 3 feet deep. The dominant pike took the choicest cover, forcing the bass to use the shallower cover.

If you watch much pike fishing on television, you see anglers catching big pike from very shallow water. That usually takes place very early in the spring in remote Canadian lakes. Here in Pennsylvania, pike are protected by a closed season during that period when they are most vulnerable. Through most of our pike fishing season pike will not be in very shallow water, especially larger pike. The best available weed cover will be the deeper weeds, and the outside edge of the weed beds.

An exception to this depth rule occurs when the lake also holds muskies, as in Glendale Lake. Where the deep weed line is the choice feeding cover, the larger, more aggressive muskies usually hold that area. This exception also has exceptions, because one reason a big musky lurks at the deep edge is to eat fish about the size of typical pike.

Not all Pennsylvania pike waters have weeds, though, at least not suitable as pike cover. Still, you can expect to find the hungry pike in the best available cover.

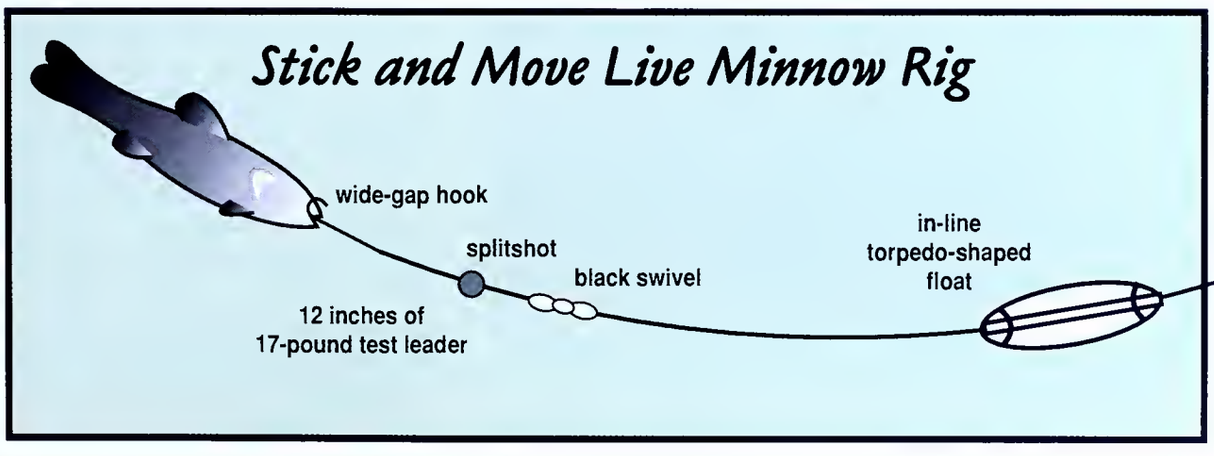
Bark rule

Look at the Allegheny Reservoir, for example, one of the best pike waters in the state. It produced the current and two previous state record pike. Here there are practically no weeds. Instead, the pike primarily use fallen trees. All fallen trees are not the same, though.

I go about fishing for pike at the Allegheny Reservoir a couple of different ways. One way is simply to work my way along the shoreline with the electric motor, casting to every bit of cover I can locate. The other way, the approach I use when I am really serious about catching fish, when I want to make the best use of my time, I move more rapidly between the best available cover–fallen trees with the greatest amount of underwater limbs.

The problem with this approach is determining which trees have a lot of underwater limbs. One way is simply to look underwater with polarized glasses, but getting that close will probably spook the pike. Another way is to use the sonar when the limbs are too deep to be visible. But that is time-consuming and still might spook the pike. So instead, I use the "bark rule."

This rig is designed specifically for casting and pulling a minnow from the water frequently with minimal damage to the minnow. It is designed for pike fishing, allowing for their sharp teeth, their wariness of heavy fishing line, and the need to cast accurately into cover.



Best Available Cover For PIKE

As time passes the limbs of fallen trees break off and float away or sink to the bottom. The smaller limbs go first, then the larger limbs. Once the smaller limbs go, the tree will not be choice pike cover. At the same time the limbs are going, so is the bark. That bark, or lack of bark, is usually a lot easier to see, even from a distance, because several feet of the trunk is usually out of water. You can cruise parallel to the shore at a pretty good clip and see if bark remains on the tree trunk. If the trunk is bare you can bet that not many limbs remain. On the other hand, if there is a lot of bark on the trunk, a lot of limbs probably remain attached to the underwater portion of the tree.

The best pike spots I have found in the Allegheny Reservoir were tangles of two or three trees. Some of the best were so freshly fallen that they still had green leaves.

Hertzel's Hole

My first experiences with pike were in the Allegheny River at a place we called Hertzel's Hole. Hertzel's Hole is a cut in the river bank that creates a deep, quiet eddy. This area has neither weeds nor fallen trees. However, boulders line the upriver edge of the hole. Pike use those boulders as cover. They are the best available cover.



I have enjoyed many pleasant mornings catching several dozen pike, or more, from the boulders at Hertzel's Hole. It has been some of the best pike fishing I have seen in this state.

In rivers or creeks, current takes precedence over cover in pike location. Pike are not fish of the current. Of course, they must go through it to get from place to place. Pike holding water, though, has little or no current! Eliminate areas with heavy to moderate current from your search. Those small current breaks that hold trout or smallmouth bass almost certainly don't hold pike. Instead, look for pike in coves, backwaters, and big, calm pools.

Across and downriver a few hundred yards from Hertzel's Hole is a cove at the mouth of an old mill race. The cove is soft-bottomed, with no boulders or weeds. Pike use sunken logs for cover in that cove.

I am quite sure that if there were suitable weeds in that part of the river, the pike would be concentrated in and around those weeds. Given a choice, I believe pike prefer weeds. Fallen trees are probably their second choice, though this might be the wrong way to look at the situation. Rocks and boulders, it seems to me, are a distinct third choice as pike cover. But when they are the best available cover, fishing around them can be very good. I have enjoyed many pleasant mornings catching several dozen pike, or more, from the boulders at Hertzel's Hole. It has been some of the best pike fishing I have seen in this state.

When the river level is high, pike use flooded brush for cover. They seem to prefer that to the boulders. As a general rule, I believe pike prefer plant cover to mineral cover.

My point is that pike use the best available cover in any water they inhabit, whether that's weeds, logs, boulders or anything else. This brings us to the next major point–how to get the pike out of the cover.

Rigging minnows for pike in cover

Live minnows are the best pike bait. This is a powerful statement. For most gamefishes, the best bait is debatable. For pike, I do not believe there is any need for debate, if we agree that the best bait is the bait that catches the most pike, the most often. As far as I know, adult pike eat little else than fish. In some far-north lakes the diets of mature pike are primarily smaller pike. Sure, they might pull a duckling under now and again, or devour a mouse or other small rodent that goes for a swim. But things such as these comprise a minute portion of the pike diet.

Usually, when I am doing my most serious pike fishing, concentrating on the best available cover, I do not waste a lot of time at any one piece of cover. I move the bait frequently at each stop. If the lake or creek has a lot of cover I rarely spend more than 15 minutes at any one place, unless I start catching fish. For this kind of fishing I use my "stick & move" live minnow rig, which is specifically designed for casting and pulling a minnow from the water frequently with minimal damage to the minnow. It is designed specifically for pike fishing, with allowance for their sharp teeth, their wariness of heavy fishing line, and the need to cast accurately into cover.

The stick & move live bait rig consists of a wide-gap hook, a foot-long 17-pound monofilament leader, a swivel, a splitshot, and an adjustable in-line float.

The hook gap should be wider than the thickness of the bait minnow. This minimizes the possibility of sinking the hook into the minnow instead of the pike. Depending on the size of the minnow, the hook size is from 4 to 1/0. Use a fine-wire hook because it does minimal damage to the minnow. If properly sharpened so that it sinks into the bend, even a big pike will not straighten a fine-wire hook.

photos-Mike Bleech



The splitshot should be just large enough to keep the minnow down, unless you use a sliding float, in which case you need enough weight to slide the line through the float. Most of the minnows I prefer as pike bait tend to swim toward the surface. When the pike are very active, you do not even have to get the bait in the water. They will come out after it. Honest! But the pike usually are not that active, so keep the bait close to the depth where you expect the pike to be.

A 17-pound-test leader will not discourage too many pike from taking the bait, yet it will prevent most cutoffs as long as it is checked for nicks after each pike. Why not just use 17-pound main line? Because pike are often line-shy.

When the Allegheny Reservoir was new, just after I finished my stint in the Army, my pal Bill Anderson and I spent just about every weekend in May and June fishing for pike in the Kinzua Arm of the reservoir. We fished in the tangles of newly fallen trees, and usually caught a dozen, sometimes many more, each morning. The problem was that in those days, the early 1970s, our "heavy" fishing outfits were spooled with 8-pound line. When a big pike took the bait, and most mornings we hooked a big pike or two, it broke us off in the tangled underwater limbs. Our fishing line was not nearly strong enough to power them out of the cover.

We were too set in our ways for young fellows. It took a few years before we decided we needed more powerful outfits for pike fishing. We tried level-wind casting outfits spooled with 17-pound mono. But guess what–the big pike ignored the minnows we dangled with those rigs, but continued to strike the old 8-pound rigs we still used alongside the new heavy outfits.

As the years went by and we accumulated more fishing tackle, we finally used nothing but heavier outfits for pike fishing. We boated a few big pike, but we never had as much action as we did with the lighter outfits–not nearly as much.

It took a while for me to catch on, and it still does not make much sense, but pike do not seem to mind a short leader, at least not nearly to the extent that they object to thick, main fishing line. Still, I try to keep the leader as inconspicuous as possible. Normally I use a 17-pound low-visibility mono leader. But a single-strand, non-coated wire leader might be at least as effective. In either case, limit the length of the leader to 12 inches or less.

The swivel is just a good way to connect the leader to the main line, with the added line twist protection. Use black swivels instead of silver or gold, because pike often strike shiny swivels, and might cut the line.

Floats are probably the least understood component of this rig, or at least they cause more problems than any other. An in-line float, one that is roughly torpedo-shaped and lies in line with the fishing line, casts farther and more accurately than any float that is less streamlined or that flops around the line. Also, and just as important, the in-line torpedo-shaped float is pulled through the water with little resistance when a pike takes the bait.

Once a pike is hooked, it might take the line into cover. This means a lost fish in many cases because either the line will break from abrasion or it will get tangled in the cover. An in-line torpedo-shaped float can be pulled back through the cover more easily than any other float, with the possible exception of balloons.

The minnow can be hooked anywhere. For stick & move fishing, I hook the minnow through both lips, inserting the hook from the bottom. This pulls the minnow forward through the water, in the natural manner. Hooking a minnow anywhere else quickly kills it if it is moved much.

On the other hand, when I decide to fish in one place for a long time, I prefer to hook the minnow near the dorsal fin. This hangs the minnow in a more natural manner than lip hooking. If the minnow is hooked lightly, meaning the hook does not pierce the spine or vital organs of the minnow, hooking near the dorsal fin keeps a minnow lively longer than lip hooking.

Pennsylvania Pike Waters

Pike are native to our Ohio River and Lake Erie drainages, and most of our better pike fishing is still in these waters.

Presque Isle Bay and the lagoons of Presque Isle State Park offer very good pike fishing that is mostly ignored, in spite of the fact that it is visible from our third largest city. The main bay is the best place for big pike. This is probably the most likely place in the state to catch a 10-pound pike, though for some reason they do not seem to get much bigger here. Eaton Reservoir, a small impoundment in the northeast corner of Erie County, is loaded with smaller pike, and a few bigger ones.

Crawford County probably has more pike waters than any other county, starting with the largest natural lake in the state, Conneaut Lake. Clear Lake has the best pike fishing in the county. Most of the pike here are small, though every now and then someone catches a 15-pounder. Geneva Marsh and French Creek also have good pike populations.

In Mercer County, Lake Wilhelm and Shenango Lake have fair pike fishing.

The Allegheny Reservoir is the best opportunity for huge pike. Though not common, 20-pound pike swim here. Look for them in the large bays. Also in Warren County, Conewango and Brokenstraw creeks hold fair to good pike populations.

The Allegheny River has the most extensive pike fishing in the state. They get as far upriver as Coudersport, where it is considered trout water, and some wander down to Pittsburgh. Pike hotspots are scattered. Most are near spawning habitat, which is disappearing.

Glendale Lake, while not native pike water, is the only water in the state containing all members of the pike family–northern pike, amur pike, pickerel and muskellunge. Trophy pike are a definite possibility here.–*MB*.



SULPHUR EMERGERS

by Charles R. Meck

Look at many of the once-polluted waters in the state and the hatches these waters now hold. The Little Juniata River, Spring Creek, Quittapahilla Creek, the Little Schuylkill River and dozens of others have returned to productive trout waters within the past three decades.

What do they all have in common? Many of them host the same aquatic insects. It seems that some mayfly hatches reappear on once-polluted streams more quickly than on others. Light cahills and sulphurs constitute two of these hatches that come back quickly to a recovering stream.

Many old-time anglers tell me that even during the height of pollution on the Little Juniata River, it held a superb sulphur hatch. I vividly remember fishing the Little Juniata River shortly after it rebounded. That first year I fished the river, in 1972, it held a sulphur hatch that lasted for weeks. Fishing the sulphur hatch then produced dozens of strikes.

You'll find the sulphur hatch on many more than just recovering streams in the state. In the list of streams where you can find the hatch, you'll find sulphur hatches appearing sometimes as early as the second week in May on some and lasting well into June on many. Not only do you find the hatch common and long-lasting, but you also find the time of day it appears predictable. For the first week of its appearance, especially if the hatch encounters cold weather, sulphurs often appear in midafternoon. Sometimes this atypical afternoon hatch can last for several hours. If you're fortunate enough to hit an afternoon hatch, you're in for some real excitement. After the first week of the hatch, sulphurs get in a routine and usually appear just before dusk. Inclement weather, however, can create afternoon hatches even in June.

So you find the hatch on many Commonwealth streams for a long period and with plenty of rising trout. But even with this advance knowledge, fishing the sulphur hatch to many anglers can produce a totally frustrating experience—unless you're willing to pursue some new strategies.

Many fly fishers think they have to use floating or dry flies to match the sulphur hatch. But if you take time during a hatch to watch feeding trout, you'll change your thinking. Follow some of the duns resting on the surface and floating downstream. See how few trout take. During a full-blown sulphur hatch, you witness many splashing rises. Many of these rise forms suggest trout chasing emerging nymphs just under the surface rather than taking sulphur duns on the surface. Often, during the sulphur hatch, you observe splashing rises reminiscent of an explosive caddisfly hatch. Anglers often misinterpret these as rises to duns on the surface rather than rises to emerging sulphurs just under the surface.

Occasionally you'll catch trout on Sulphur dry flies during a hatch, especially if you look for trout taking the naturals on the surface. But to be more consistent and successful, try a pattern just under the surface for those trout that refuse the floating pattern. A weighted Sulphur Emerger pattern, fished on a tandem just a few feet behind a dry fly, will sink several inches beneath the surface. While the Sulphur Emerger sinks under the surface, the Sulphur dry fly floats on the surface and acts as a strike indicator–a strike indicator, by the way, that also catches trout.

Tie the emerger on a size 14 long shank nymph hook (like the Mustad 3906B) and add weight to the body of the hook when you're tying. Experiment by tying different amounts of weight on patterns. I use .015 lead wire and make 6 to 10 wraps around the shank to get the desired depth on the pattern.

But after close observation will this method of fishing a sulphur hatch work more effectively than using a floating Sulphur artificial? Using this weighted pattern during a sulphur hatch for me has increased the number of trout caught threefold.

In the chart you'll see that many of the state's better freestone streams boast excellent sulphur hatches. The First Fork of the Sinnemahoning at Wharton holds a good hatch near the end of May. If you fish this hatch you'll find that sulphurs here range smaller than on many of the more fertile streams. Take some Sulphur floating patterns in size 18 and tie some of the emerger patterns on size 16 hooks.

Fish to rising trout as you would normally. Cast a few feet above rising trout and get prepared for plenty of strikes. If you

Illustration-Charles R. Meck

hook a trout on the dry fly or upper pattern, make certain you don't get the leader tangled.

Take time out this May and June to fish one of the many great sulphur hatches on Pennsylvania trout streams. You'll find these hatches common, predictable and fun to fly fish—if you're adequately prepared. But before you do, make certain you're well prepared for this hatch. Take plenty of Sulphur dry flies with you–and don't forget the Sulphur Emerger. Tie the emerger pattern behind the dry fly and practice casting the two and get set for plenty of action. Once you get the knack of casting the two patterns and you see the dry fly pattern pulled underneath the surface, you'll wonder why you've never used this simple but productive technique before.



photo Barry & Cathy Beck

Some Pennsylvania Streams and Rivers with Sulphur Hatches

Little Juniata River
Spring Creek
Piney Creek (Blair County)
Clover Creek (Blair County)
Canoe Creek (Blair County)
Yellow Creek
Big Fishing Creek
Fishing Creek
(Columbia County)
First Fork of the
Sinnemahoning Creek
Yellow Breeches Creek
Falling Springs
Bald Eagle Creek
(Blair County)
Bald Eagle (lower end)
Loyalsock Creek Little
Lehigh
Bowman Creek
Clark Creek
Lackawaxen River
Lehigh River
Delaware River
Mud Run
Brodhead Creek
Dyberry Creek
Valley Creek
Tulpehocken Creek
Ridley Creek
French Creek
Octoraro Creek
Donegal Creek
Cedar Creek (Lehigh County)
Monocacy Creek
East Fork of the
Sinnemahoning
Muncy Creek
Little Pine Creek
Pine Creek
Slate Run
Kettle Creek
Cross Fork Creek
Young Woman's Creek
Hammersley Run
Oswayo Creek
Allegheny River
Driftwood Branch of the
Sinnemahoning
Penns Creek
Elk Creek
White Deer Creek
Logan Branch
LeTort Spring Run
Big Spring Run
Muddy Creek
Codorus Creek
Kishacoquillas Creek
Blacklog Creek
Big Cove Creek
Standing Stone Creek
Caldwell Creek
Pine Creek (Forest County)
Oil Creek
Slippery Rock Creek
Neshannock Creek
Cool Spring Run
Little Sandy Creek
North Fork, Red Bank
Creek
Spring Creek
(Clarion Creek)
West Branch, Clarion River
East Branch,
Mahoning Creek
Loyalhanna Creek
Laurel Hill Creek
Cove Creek Little
Mahoning Creek
Wills Creek
Brush Creek
(Somerset County)
Little Schuylkill River
Quittapahilla Creek
Lackawanna River
Pine Creek (Centre County)
Grays Run
Mill Creek
Larrys Creek



SPRING CRE

by Walt Young



EK

Centre County's Spring Creek has long been one of the best-known trout streams in Pennsylvania. Until 1977, it was one of the most heavily stocked waters in the state, attracting throngs of anglers for the first few months of trout season. Then, Spring Creek's lofty reputation was tarnished when its trout were found to be contaminated with traces of the chemical pesticides Kepone and Mirex in levels high enough to be unsafe for human consumption.

A chemical plant about a half-mile from the stream had manufactured Kepone and Mirex. Apparently, a leak in a settling pond let these chemicals escape into the groundwater and subsequently into the Spring Creek ecosystem.

Beginning in 1978, only a few miles of stream above Route 26 were stocked, and in 1981 stocking was discontinued altogether. In 1982, regulations were adopted making it illegal to kill or possess fish from Spring Creek. Anglers seemed to have deserted this once-popular fishery.

The Kepone and Mirex situation rallied conservation groups such as Trout Unlimited and the Clearwater Conservancy into action. In 1991, the Department of Environmental Resources designated Spring Creek as a High Quality Cold Water Fishery, thus providing the stream with strict protection against future degradation.

The Fish and Boat Commission took a giant step toward the preservation of Spring Creek when in 1992 it purchased a large tract of land in the Spring Creek corridor. This acquisition returned over a mile of highly desirable water to public access after having been closed for several years.

Spring Creek originates near the town of Boalsburg, but the headwaters are often little more than a trickle until it is joined by a small tributary, Cedar Run. Cedar Run, and the section of Spring Creek downstream from it to Oak Hall, is all private property with no public access.

Immediately below Oak Hall, a large limestone quarry flanks the stream. Even though it is possible to get to the stream either above or below the quarry, it is advisable to do so during those days or times when the quarry is not in operation.



photos-Walt Young

Aside from the chemicals' rendering the fish unfit to eat, the trout seem to show few, if any, effects from the presence of Kepone and Mirex. A Penn State study showed that fishing pressure was the same or greater, but that distribution of angling pressure was different. The pressure was no longer concentrated in the two weeks after opening day. It was now year-round, which had the effect of lessening the pressure.

With the combination of diminished fishing pressure and no-kill regulations, the population of wild brown trout not only maintained itself but thrived. Those who continued to fish Spring Creek through the early 1980s found the fishing better than ever. Paradoxically, the pollution that tainted the fishery had managed to improve the fishing.

About a half-mile from the quarry, Spring Creek winds through the village of Lemont. The stream is still relatively small here. Most of the water is a series of small pools and riffles. Although only a few landowners in this area post their property against fishing, the experience here is truly one of fishing "in town," and most anglers would probably better enjoy exploring much of the 12 miles of water available on the rest of the stream.

Spring Creek crosses Route 26 just downstream of Lemont. Spring Creek Park offers parking and easy access near the village of Houserville.

SPRING CREEK

The creek becomes noticeably larger here with the influx of a tributary, Slab Cabin Run, and for a mile or more it takes on the character of an open meadow stream.

The trout population in this section is not as dense as in many other areas of the stream. Fishing pressure is also not as heavy, probably because of the difficulty of fishing the deep, slow pools and shallow flats so prevalent here. Many of these underfished spots, however, surrender some bona fide lunker brown trout each season to those anglers up to the challenge.

Downstream of Houserville, Rock Road parallels the west side of Spring Creek to its intersection with Trout Road. From there Rock Road cuts away from the creek briefly before rejoining it a short distance above an area known as "The Rock" for the magnificent limestone outcrop that overlooks the stream at that point. Numerous good pools and pocket water are available in this stretch.

At "The Rock" a large gravel parking lot and a footpath along the west bank of the stream offer walk-in access downstream for a mile or two into the so-called Benner Spring area. This heavily wooded area represents the least-developed section of the entire Spring Creek corridor. Most of the land is owned by the Department of Correction as part of the Rockview State Penitentiary.

For decades this portion of Spring Creek was one of the easiest accessible and most popular fishing spots on the entire stream. By taking Shiloh Road just off Route 150 near the Nittany Mall, anglers could drive directly to one of several ample parking areas along the west streambank just below the Fish and Boat Commission's Benner Spring Research Station. But early in the spring of 1993, the bridge leading to the parking areas was fenced off, and a few months later barricades were erected to eliminate what little off-road parking had exited on the east side.

There are still plenty of anglers willing to make the hike in from "The Rock," but it rarely is as crowded as in previous years. Many are drawn by the numerous large rainbow trout in this area, particularly the stretch adjacent to the Benner Spring Research Station. Apparently, enough rainbows escape into the stream from the raceways there to maintain a consistent population, and they seem to do well. More rainbows over 20 inches are caught here than anywhere else on the stream.



Downstream a few miles from Benner Spring is the best-known spot on Spring Creek, and quite possibly the most famous piece of trout water in the whole state—Fishermans Paradise. This one-mile section of stream was set aside as a fly-fishing-only project back in the mid-1930s, making it the first special-regulation area of its kind in Pennsylvania, if not the entire country. Always immensely popular, a trip to the Paradise was almost considered a rite of passage for generations of Keystone State fly rodders.

The Paradise is currently managed as no harvest, fly fishing only, meaning that all fishing must be done with conventional fly tackle and barbless flies. Fishing is permitted year-round, and wading is not permitted. The streambanks are well-maintained throughout most of the project, making it an ideal situation for handicapped anglers or anyone who doesn't feel comfortable negotiating a slippery stream bottom.

There is an excellent population of both browns and rainbows in the Paradise. The average size of the fish is as good as any part of the stream, and day in and day out provides the opportunity for hooking a real lunker.

The fishing here is rarely easy, however. If there is such a thing as educated fish, the trout in the Paradise are it. Steady angling pressure here all year long makes the fish keenly aware of what it's all about. But they are not impossible, either. Small flies, long leaders and precise presentations along with ample doses of patience usually bring success.

Many Paradise regulars have learned that some of the larger fish move into shallow water next to the bank to feed early in the morning. By carefully stalking these bank-feeders, it is often possible to catch several good fish before they retreat back to the sanctuary of the deeper runs.

Another time when the bigger residents of the Paradise tend to be vulnerable is after a rain discolors the water. Once again, the larger fish are close to the bank and on the feed. Tiny flies and light tippets can be abandoned in favor of large, dark-colored marabou streamers, Woolly Buggers and other streamer-type flies that move well in the water.

Fishermans Paradise is continually popular with visiting anglers because it offers other diversions besides good trout fishing.

map graphic-Ted Walke

The trout in Spring Creek break out of their winter doldrums and begin to feed regularly soon after the first warm spell in the spring brings the water close to the 50-degree mark.

There are two large parking lots with picnic tables and shade trees nearby. The Bellefonte Fish Culture Station, complete with a visitor's center and rest rooms, is on the same site. Even non-fishing family members usually enjoy touring the hatchery facilities and seeing the thousands of trout from tiny fingerlings to enormous brood fish that are raised each year at this facility.

The section of Spring Creek from Fishermans Paradise downstream to Bellefonte is by far the most heavily fished portion of the stream. A road closely parallels the creek from the lower boundary of the Paradise to Route 550 and gives passersby a great view of the many beautiful pools.

This area also provides abundant angler access because it encompasses most of the stream frontage recently acquired by the Fish and Boat Commission. Although there is an abundance of public land, much private property also borders the stream throughout this section. In spite of an ever-increasing amount of fishing pressure, most of these landowners continue to permit fishing. Anglers are reminded that courtesy and respect help maintain this privilege.

By the time Spring Creek winds its way through the town of Bellefonte, water from two tributaries, Logan Branch and Buffalo Run, turn it into a sizable limestone stream. Logan Branch has an excellent population of wild brown trout, and its upper end is also stocked. The Pleasant Gap Fish Culture Station and its unique visitor's center are located on Logan Branch just off Route 144 about two miles from Bellefonte.

Much of Spring Creek below Bellefonte consists of long, wide pools and expansive weed beds. Excellent dry-fly fishing can be had here in the evening during the late spring and early summer. Reasonable care should be exercised when fishing these pools. Heavy siltation in some of the slower stretches can make wading difficult or even treacherous.

In Milesburg, a community park gives easy access and parking for the last few hundred yards of Spring Creek before its junction with Bald Eagle Creek. Lots of good pocket water is available from the mouth upstream to an old power plant dam, making this a favorite haunt of nymph fishermen.

Its tremendous population of wild trout and the liberal amount of public access over nearly its entire length contribute greatly to Spring Creek's popularity. But probably the characteristic that endears most anglers to Spring Creek is the year-round fishing opportunities it has to offer.

The trout in Spring Creek break out of their winter doldrums and begin to feed regularly soon after the first warm spell in the spring brings the water close to the 50-degree mark. Those skilled in wet-fly and nymph fishing can have steady action on many days this time of year.

Impressionistic nymph patterns such as the Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear or Pheasant Tail in sizes 12 or 14 seem to take fish most of the time. Beadhead-style nymphs have been absolute killers on some days during the last few seasons.

Another local pattern developed on Spring Creek is the Walt's Worm, a large, fur-bodied fly tied to represent a crane fly larva. Over the past 10 years, this fly has acquired a large following because it is such a consistent producer almost any time of year.

Dry-fly fishing gets going early on Spring Creek, too. A good hatch of size 20 blue-winged olive mayflies usually occurs throughout March, and depending on the weather, can linger into early April. About mid-month, look for an olive-bodied caddis with grayish-tan wings. These flies are a size 14 or 16 and emerge around noon.

During this same period, a small yellow crane fly hatches sporadically most of the day. Even though these insects rarely evoke a steady rise of fish, fishing the water with a spent-wing pattern, size 14 or 16, frequently draws strikes for those wishing to fish on the surface.

Around the second week of May, the premier angling event occurs on Spring Creek–the sulphur hatch. These butter-colored mayflies usually produce consistent fishing until late June while several species of sulphurs hatch one after another throughout this period, each a little smaller than the last. Early on the flies run size 12 or 14. Later they are size 16 or 18.

Hatching takes place in early evening with fish rising steadily as they pluck newly hatched sulphurs from the surface. After sunset, swarms of sulphur spinners congregate over riffles to lay their eggs and die. Trout line up in the pools below to feed heavily on the spent females carried along by the current.

With summer, hatches diminish somewhat and the trout turn their attention to a terrestrial diet. Anglers do well working ants, beetles and crickets around grassy banks and overhanging vegetation. If the fish can't be provoked to rise, fish subsurface with sowbug or cressbug imitations along the edges of weed beds.

Mid-July brings the hatch many small-fly specialists live for, the tiny mayfly known as the Trico. On many mornings from then until well into fall, trout can be found sipping these minute insects. Trico fishing is truly finesse fishing, requiring size 24 flies, 6X and 7X tippets.

As the days shorten in the fall, little blue-winged olives appear again, along with the tan caddis and rusty crane flies. At times, nymph fishing can be as consistent as it is in the spring, with beadhead patterns working especially well.

For those wishing to brave the elements, winter fishing on Spring Creek can be surprisingly productive. Unless there is a prolonged period of bitter cold, the stream rarely freezes over because of the many springs feeding it throughout its length. The standard wintertime tactic is to fish nymphs carefully in the deeper runs and pools. On bright days, however, there are frequently good midge hatches that bring fish to the surface to sip this tiny fare, making it possible to take fish on dries even this time of year.

Spring Creek is a special trout stream, still rich in tradition despite all the problems it has suffered over the years. Now it offers the opportunity to fish over a self-sustaining population of wild brown trout equaled only by a handful of streams in the East. Spring Creek is also a stream with many friends, making the future of this valuable resource brighter than it has been in a long time.

Through the Seasons on Presque Isle Bay

by Darl Black



Summertime on Presque Isle Bay means bass fishing. Forget the lagoons. The bigger largemouths have moved out of the marshy ponds into the bay, where they find plenty of baitfish. Focus your efforts on the deep weed line in at least 10 feet of water.

Presque Isle Peninsula is a "come hither" finger, wrapping around 3,840 acres of Lake Erie water. The almost totally enclosed water, known as Presque Isle Bay, or simply "the Bay" to locals, provides not only the sole natural Great Lakes harbor along 40 miles of Pennsylvania coastline, but also some of the finest angling opportunities in the entire state. The waters of Presque Isle include the main bay as well as several smaller bays and a series of interconnecting marshy ponds called the lagoons. Misery Bay, Horseshoe Pond and Marina Lake are the bays within the Bay.

Weedy flats in the main bay, lagoons and smaller bays make this an ideal spawning and nursery habitat for many fish species. Year-round residents include largemouth bass, northern pike, muskies, crappies, sunfish, rock bass, bullheads and carp, along with unique bowfin and gar. Transient species include smallmouth bass, steelhead, coho salmon, white bass, yellow perch and sheepshead. These fish move into the bay from Lake Erie during certain times of the year.

This mixture of species means something is always biting in the bay, regardless of the season. Come along on a year-round tour to discover the fishing excitement that is Presque Isle Bay.

Spring

Ed Kissell, a lifelong bay angler, jumps into the spring fishing as soon as the ice cover begins to melt. Ice-out usually occurs around mid-March, but may be earlier or later depending on the severity of the winter.

"With the first open water, fishing is centered at the head of the bay in the far western corner," says Kissell. "This area is immediately on your right as you drive onto the peninsula. The water depth is very shallow with large weedbeds that hold a lot of crappies right at ice-out. A significant number of steelhead are taken from this area in the early spring, too."

Anchoring a boat over the remnants of last year's weedbeds and still-fishing a minnow hung below a float is the best approach for crappies.

Steelheads are taken on a variety of baits and lures, including maggot-tipped jigs below a bobber. Spinners are equally productive this time of year. As the ice melts in other areas of the bay, steelhead can be caught almost anywhere—either from shore or from a boat.

photo-Darl Black



Dave Lefebre, another Erie-bred angler, looks forward to years with early ice-out.

"The marshy shallows are filled with big pike preparing to spawn as soon as the ice goes off," says Lefebre. "With pike season closing March 15, you don't get this angling opportunity every year. A mild winter may mean open water before mid-March.

"A shallow-running stickbait, like a Bomber Long A or Thunderstick, is the best lure to use," says Lefebre. "Color does not really matter. I generally find silver or shad patterns with an orange belly to be most effective. Fish the lure very slowly using a steady retrieve with an occasional stop and twitch. Use a wire leader to prevent bite-offs."

Lefebre advises anglers to skip the main bay and focus their efforts on the shallow lagoon ponds in about one to three feet of water. In early April, crappies and steelhead are still biting, but the focus for some anglers switches to smallmouth bass, which are moving into the bay from Lake Erie.

Dave Lehman, a Titusville angler, makes weekly trips to Presque Isle Bay in anticipation of enjoying several good smallmouth outings before bass season closes in mid-April.

"I like to start as early as possible, sometimes the end of March if spring weather has been cooperative," Lehman says. "The smallmouths are usually in 15 to 20 feet of water this time of year. My favorite lure is a 3-inch to 4-inch twisty-tail grub on a 1/4-ounce leadhead. The top color is usually smoke, although I switch colors until I find exactly what is working."

During this early bite, the numbers of bass caught are not high. Still, it is the best time to hang a 4-pound to 6-pound smallie.

At this same time, Lefebre is still probing the lagoons. The target species has changed from pike to largemouth bass. His lure of choice is a black-skirted size 5 willow-leaf spinnerbait. Largemouths can be found in shallow water relating to wood or old weeds.

By mid-April the crappie bite has expanded to other parts of Presque Isle waters. In addition to the head of the bay, hungry crappies can be found in Marina Lake, Horseshoe Pond, sections of the lagoons, and along the breakwalls of city-side marinas. In the main part of the bay, yellow perch are caught on small jigs and live minnows. Among the popular shore fishing sites for perch are the Public Dock, East & West piers to Marina Lake, and the North & South Channel piers.

When northern pike season reopens in early May, the bite can be very good, according to Lefebre. Pike have moved out of the lagoons. The toothy critters are feeding ravenously on schools of shiners, particularly in Marina Lake and Misery Bay, the two bays with entrance channels to the lagoons. One of Lefebre's favorite presentations is walking a spinnerbait over the tops of emerging weedbeds.

White bass (a.k.a. silver bass) frequently show up in Presque Isle Bay from early May through late June. When you encounter a school, the action is fast and furious. Finding them, however, is not a sure thing. White bass rarely hold at one site for more than a few minutes. Instead, they follow moving schools of emerald shiners. Drifting the edges of the bay flats is a good approach.

White or silver jigs, chrome jigging spoons, blade baits, small shad-colored crankbaits and chartreuse spinnerbaits are among the offerings that white bass readily slam. When casting to a

Through the Seasons on Presque Isle Bay

school of whites, multiple hits occur on a retrieve until a fish is finally hooked. It is not uncommon to catch a white bass on every cast—until the school spooks.

Late spring is also the time to sample the outstanding rock bass fishing. This hard-fighting panfish spawns when water temperature reaches 60 to 70 degrees. This is a time when either their appetite or protective nesting instinct causes rock bass to strike artificial lures with the ferocity of a tiger. Usually rockies can be found in depths from about 5 feet to 15 feet on rock outcroppings or wood snags (such as old sunken boats or logs). When spawning, they are also found in sparse weeds over a gravel/sandy bottom.

Summer

For most anglers, the reopening of bass season in mid-June signals the start of summer fishing season.

Many of the temporary spring residents have moved back to Lake Erie. Warm water has forced steelhead to retreat to the lake. Most of the white bass and perch schools have left because they find open-water baitfish in Lake Erie more to their liking.

Smallmouth bass are just completing their spawn and are in the process of leaving the bay. A few remain all summer, but the majority of smallies return to Lake Erie by early July.

Lehman enjoys late June on Presque Isle Bay because both largemouth and smallmouth bass are still available.

"It's a nice combination," says Lehman. "I can fish for smallies or largemouths simply by making some adjustments to my fishing location. This time of year, smallies can be both shallow and deep in the bay. Largemouths are almost exclusively holding in weeds. Eventually, however, the smallmouth bite falls off, while the largemouth bite continues strong through the summer.

"There are many baits that work for both largemouths and smallmouths," says Lehman. "What I use depends on conditions. I like to fish a jig-and-pig only when I can see the pockets in the weedbeds so I can flip the bait into the opening. I fish a plastic worm only when I can see the outside edge of the weedbed. When waves or overcast skies reduce visibility, I go to a spinnerbait or crankbait. If the surface is flat, I might throw topwater or jerk a Slug-Go.

"What I really like about bass fishing at Presque Isle Bay is the number of options you have—I can fish slop, reeds, weed edges, deep breaklines, rock piles, mid-bay humps or breakwalls. If not catching fish in one situation, you can try something else."

Lefebre has completely switched fishing locations and tactics for summer, too.

"Forget the lagoons," Lefebre says. "Most of the quality largemouth have moved out of the marshy ponds and into the bay where there is an abundance of baitfish. The few bass that remain in the lagoons are well-protected by a canopy of almost impenetrable vegetation."

In June and July, Lefebre flips weedbeds in the main bay. He points out this is weedbed fishing time, not weedline fishing. His choice of bait is an 8-inch worm.

"The bass seem to be bunched up in the weedbeds," says Lefebre. "The presentation is to flip a plastic worm into the holes, jump it a couple of times, and then flip to the next opening. At times I have caught and released as many as 15 bass in one small area. Largemouths run 14 to 17 inches with an occasional 4-pounder."

In late summer, Lefebre makes another move. This time the focus is the deep weedline in at least 10 feet of water. The same big plastic worms produce, as well as deep-diving crankbaits.

"Marina breakwalls on the city side are also productive for largemouth at this time," says Lefebre. "I don't target pike during the summer, but I get bit off a lot. The best way to catch pike in Presque Isle Bay in the summer is with bass lures on the outside weed line."

Only a handful of anglers fishes for Presque Isle muskies anymore. The current low population of these big fish in the bay is a factor. For the diehards who still pursue muskies, summer is the preferred time and trolling is the approach. Medium-depth musky plugs like the Pikie Minnow and Swim Whizz can be found on the end of their lines. And if you look closely, the plug color will be blue.

Crappie action has slowed considerably. Larger crappies have shifted to deeper breaks near weedy flats. Some of the better areas are breakwalls and marina entrances on the city side of the bay. Typically, crappies are inactive during the middle of the day, feeding primarily in early morning or evening.

Kissell suspects unusual walleye catches made from shore on the city side of the bay late last summer are the result of a special stocking program by the SONS cooperative nursery.

Autumn into winter

As water begins to cool in the fall, more changes occur in the bay. Some species go on a feeding binge. Others return from Lake Erie.

One species that makes its presence known in late September is the northern pike. Anglers score with rattle baits, spinnerbaits and diving crankbaits fished near weedline dropoffs.

Lefebre finds an excellent largemouth bite using deep crankbaits on mid-bay humps that crest at 12 to 14 feet. This may run from September to perhaps early November.

Some anglers point to increased smallmouth activity in the bay around early October. These fish are either a schooling of smallies that remained in the bay during the summer, or perhaps a movement of lake smallies back to the bay.

In October, steelhead show up in Presque Isle again. These fish remain in the bay until spring.

From late October to ice-up, steelhead can be observed cruising just under the surface. Spinners may be effective. However, a tiny black marabou-tail jig tipped with a couple of live grubs and suspended no more than two feet below a bobber seems to outfish everything else. During November and December, concentrate your trout efforts in Misery Bay, Marina Lake, and at the head of the bay.

"Ice may begin to form as early as late December, hopefully no later than early January," says Kissell. "The head of the bay receives the first ice because it is very shallow and well-protected from winds. The next areas to freeze are Horseshoe Pond and Misery Bay.

"That first ice offers the best opportunity for yellow perch, crappies and bluegills. That's what most anglers are after. However, there are anglers who target northern pike, as well as those after trout and salmon. Fortunately, these first-ice sites produce these species, too."

Jigging a tiny teardrop ice lure tipped with a live grub is the number one method for panfish. Pike are taken on tip-ups baited with a large shiner. Tiny black Mini-Foo jigs with maggots,



suspended by a bobber, are the top steelhead presentation. Some anglers bring their open-water spinning outfits onto the ice so they can fight the powerful runs of steelhead, rather than use a hand line.

"Since the shutdown of Pennsylvania Electric's hot-water discharge, the entire bay is likely to freeze completely," says Kissell. "However, there are certain areas where one should never venture out onto the ice. These include the channel to the main lake, the channel to Marina Bay, the channel to Horseshoe Pond and the channel from Misery Bay to the lagoons. There is too much water movement in these areas to make safe ice."

The bay remains the domain of ice anglers until late February or early March when ice begins to weaken. With ice-out in March, the Presque Isle seasonal fishing cycle begins again.

Biologist's View

Commission Area Fisheries Manager Craig Billingsley has responsibility for Presque Isle Bay. Based on trap netting and electrofishing surveys, he lists northern pike, largemouth bass and crappies as outstanding fisheries there.

"This is one of the best pike waters in the state for numbers and size, yet hardly anyone fishes for them," says Billingsley. "Because the Commission uses Presque Isle to secure brood stock of muskies and pike to generate tiger hybrids, we in turn stock pike and musky fry in the bay to replace the adults that were removed. Typical stockings are 6,000 pike and 3,000 muskies. Pike are stocked every other year. Musky stocking has been sporadic. I would like to get musky stocking scheduled on an annual basis to restore the musky fishery.

"Approximately 100,000 steelhead are stocked in the bay annually," says Billingsley. "That trout stocking creates a very worthwhile fishery during the cold-water period from late fall to early spring."

Also, an annual walleye stocking is undertaken through a cooperative program with the Save Our Native Species (SONS) angling club. However, Billingsley has not seen any results from this stocking in his surveys.

Billingsley points to unusual native species found in the bay. "There are both longnose and spotted gar, with longnose predominant by far. Also, this is probably the only place in Pennsylvania where you have the opportunity to catch a bowfin."

Both gar and bowfin are living fossils with ancient lineage, making them two of the oldest families of fishes in North America.

"Bowfin are voracious feeders, preying heavily on baitfish," says Billingsley. "They hit lures used for bass, and when hooked they put up a heck of a fight."

Should you hook a bowfin, be extremely careful in handling it. They have powerful mouths filled with sharp teeth.

The future of the Presque Isle Bay sport fishery is up in the air. Zebra mussels are the culprit.

"Zebra mussels are growing on everything, even vegetation," says Billingsley. "The bay water is getting clearer as the mussels filter the plankton. Weed growth is expanding because sunlight can reach deeper. This additional vegetation is creating some problems. But the real danger is the zooplankton strained from the water by the mussels. Baitfish and young-of-the-year gamefish depend on zooplankton. As the water gets clearer and clearer from reduced plankton, the question is, what are small fish going to eat?"–*DB*.

Special Information

Presque Isle Peninsula, one of Pennsylvania's natural wonders, is a state park. It is the most visited state park in Pennsylvania. Special regulations in the park are intended to protect its fragile ecosystem.

Fishermen and boaters must be aware of the "minimum wake" regulation within 500 feet of the shore, which is strictly enforced. Also, all of Misery Bay, Horseshoe Pond, and Marina Lake are "minimum wake" areas. Outboard motors may not be operated in the lagoons, although boaters may use electric motors. Standard Commission angling regulations apply, except largemouth and smallmouth bass have a 15-inch minimum size.

There are four no-fee boat launches on Presque Isle Peninsula: Niagara (near the park office), Marina Lake, east side of Misery Bay, and the lagoon channel near Misery Bay. Additional boat launches may be found on the city side of the bay.

Although the bay provides a protective environment compared to Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay can nonetheless get very rough. Strong southwest or northeast winds, which blow parallel to the lakeshore, can create life-threatening waves in the bay. Never attempt to cross the bay in a small boat when high waves are rolling.–*DB*.

Trout Fishing

in Southeastern Pennsylvania

BY JOHN W. MCGONIGLE



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

There is no question that my favorite trout stream is Lycoming County's Blockhouse Creek. There is also no question that I don't have nearly enough opportunity to fish it because of personal and professional obligations.

Beauty, abundance of fish, size, difficulty to fish, access, fishing pressure and opportunity are all factors to consider when selecting a trout stream. Often, though, a favorite trout stream is the same as the one we can fish the most.

With that in mind, my favorite trout stream is actually Chester County's West Valley Creek, located 15 minutes from my computer. I have fished the stream since 1969. When I began trout fishing on this lovely little limestone stream, I was the one who was hooked.



There are a few hundred thousand of us in southeastern Pennsylvania who purchase fishing licenses annually, a large percentage of whom pursue trout. Many of us are quite restricted by the reality of earning a living and having little time to escape to the northern reaches of the state that harbor the beautiful, mountainous trout streams so much to our liking.

Let's look at trout streams in my end of the state, ones we can visit frequently, often even after putting in a full day at the workplace. In the five counties immediately surrounding Philadelphia, there are 36 approved trout streams listed in the 1994 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws*. Move a bit farther from the city and the number rises dramatically, including at least seven wild trout streams just outside of Bethlehem.

Chester County is getting more suburbanized every day. If you don't get into an area of the county for a month or so, someone's built something there. There is some truth to that perception, but the fact is, there are some excellent and quite remote trout streams in the county.

Even though it's not remote, West Valley Creek, flowing from Exton past the southeast corner of Downingtown, offers excellent fishing with bait, hardware and flies. A special regs section satisfies most of the fly fishing crowd with a lot of good, open water. Because it's a spring-fed limestone stream, the water temperature remains relatively good for trout late into the year, offering serious anglers more than just a month of trout fishing action.

Through the efforts of the Valley Forge Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the West Chester Fish, Game and Wildlife Association and Waterway Conservation Officer Don Lauver, West Valley Creek will now be stocked above the bridge at Whitford Road, opening more water on this popular little limestoner.

For some, the particularly beautiful water of the White Clay Creek in the southwestern corner of Chester County is hard to beat. The longest branch is the East Branch, and it runs from just north of Avondale, through Landenburg, and flows across the state line into Delaware in as pretty a setting as you can find anywhere. Its various branches offer meadow fishing, and they meander through the woods and have a beautiful but tough-to-reach section in the cradle of a valley. While offering mostly open water, there is a small stretch of special regs available for longrodders. Good access along much of its length helps the stocking situation, but its harder-to-reach sections ensure solitude and a reasonably long fishing season.

In the far western reaches of Chester County lies the East Branch of the Octoraro Creek, which is stocked inseason only. New landowners have closed several sections of stream, but what remains open is lovely and flows through both wooded and pastoral settings.

Just inside the Lancaster County line is the West Branch of the Octoraro Creek. Longer than the East Branch, the stream flows under Route 372 north of Quarryville, flowing south through Kirkwood to Kings Bridge at Noble Road. Beautifully wooded, the stream flows through a ravined section and opens into meadowland. Toward the end of the approved trout fishing stretch, there is a short special regs section for fly rodders. Parts of this stream area are large enough for those with a bent for exploration to launch a small canoe.

Moving north, still just inside Lancaster County, lies Pequea Creek. In addition to preseason stocking, this nice little trout stream gets at least two inseason stockings. The stream is open to bait and hardware its entire length.

While visiting southwestern Chester County, be sure to explore Big Elk Creek and the East Branch of Elk Creek near New London. Neither is too big, but both offer a wooded setting that helps make fishing what it's supposed to be–relaxing.

One of the more famous streams from both a historical and a fishing viewpoint is Brandywine Creek north of Downingtown. One branch runs from Route 30 along Route 282 to Glenmore. The other flows to the dam at Icedale Lake just off Route 322. In addition to being stocked by the state, the West Caln Sportsmen's Club and the Brandywine Trout and Conservation Club add

TROUT FISHING
in Southeastern Pennsylvania

thousands of trout to the waterway annually. Much of the Brandywine is wooded and rock-strewn, making it a pleasurable place to fish.

The Fish and Boat Commission just extended the stocking boundary on the West Branch of the Brandywine, moving it down to Route 340, just north of Coatesville. The extension added many more fish for southeastern Pennsylvania sportsmen.

French Creek is another popular trout stream in Chester County. It is long and meandering, with relatively easy access over much of its considerable length. The stream flows through historic St. Peter's Village, a small village of artisan and craft shops, past Knauertown, Poughtown and Kimberton, ending (as a trout stream) just before Phoenixville. The stream's warmwater section continues to flow to its confluence with the Schuylkill River. Because of heavy fishing pressure, the stream is stocked heavily. There is a short special regs section for flyrodders. The stream is medium-wide over most of its length and relatively shallow. As with most trout fishing, one is better off wading as little as possible.

For anglers who like their trout fishing a bit more relaxing, try Scotts Run Lake in French Creek State Park, just northwest of French Creek. Fishing from the shore and from boats is permitted. Outboard motors are prohibited. This small, wooded lake offers a long season because it receives fall stockings.

One underfished stream, according to Commission Area Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann, is Bucks County's Tohickon Creek. It's a real beauty, reminiscent of streams in northcentral Pennsylvania. The three-mile stretch from Ralph Stover State Park to Point Pleasant at Route 32 is float-stocked and provides walk-in fishing only. It seems that many anglers do not wish to expend the energy required to reach this beautiful spot, and it's a shame, because, as Kaufmann says, "it offers a scenic location, good numbers of fish and little fishing pressure." The Tohickon's scenic gorge offers a respite from the fast-paced action of southeastern Pennsylvania.

The stretch of the Tohickon emptying from Lake Nockamixon is stocked inseason only, always the first and third week. The water warms quickly in this stretch, so it's a good stream to fish early, while saving other, colder streams for late-season outings.

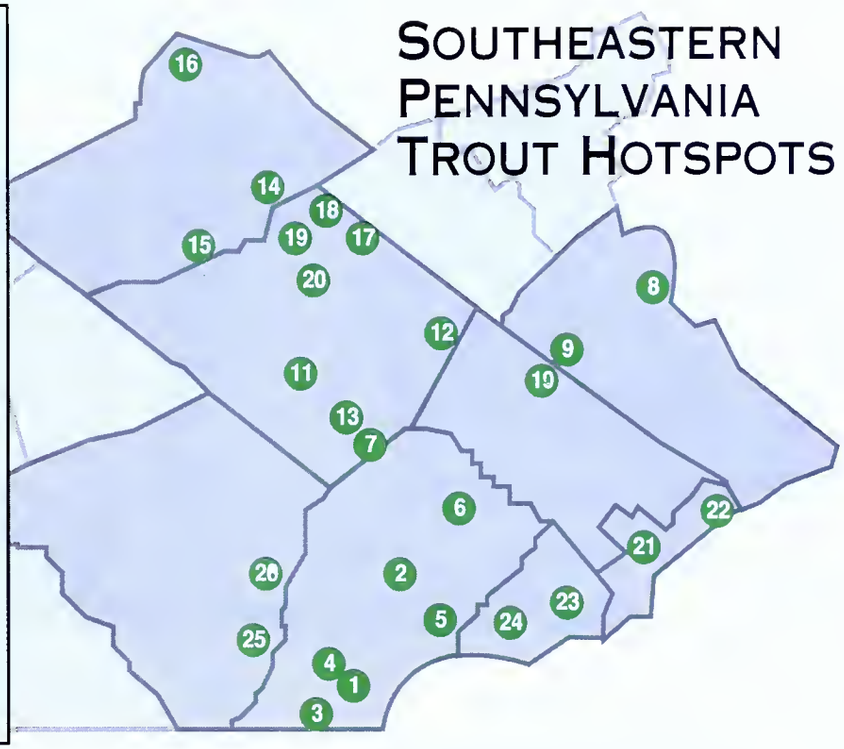
Getting away for a moment from lightly fished streams is the Bucks County section of Perkiomen Creek. According to Kaufmann, the stream is very heavily fished. Correspondingly, though, the stream is heavily stocked.



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

IN THE FIVE COUNTIES IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDING PHILADELPHIA, THERE ARE 36 APPROVED TROUT STREAMS. MOVE A BIT FARTHER FROM THE CITY AND THE NUMBER RISES DRAMATICALLY.

1. West Valley Creek, Chester Co.
2. White Clay Creek, Chester Co.
3. Big Elk Creek, Chester Co.
4. East Branch Elk Creek, Chester Co.
5. Brandywine Creek, Chester Co.
6. French Creek, Chester Co.
7. Scotts Run Lake, Berks Co.
8. Tohickon Creek, Bucks Co.
9. Perkiomen Creek, Bucks Co.
10. East Branch Perkiomen Creek, Bucks Co.
11. Allegheny Creek, Berks Co.
12. Swamp Creek, Berks Co.
13. Hay Creek, Berks Co.
14. Little Schuylkill River, Berks Co.
15. Bear Creek, Berks Co.
16. Locust Creek, Schuylkill Co.
17. Kistler Creek, Berks Co.
18. Ontelaunee Creek, Berks Co.
19. Pine Creek, Berks Co.
20. Maiden Creek, Berks Co.
21. Wissahickon Creek, Philadelphia Co.
22. Pennypack Creek, Philadelphia Co.
23. Ridley Creek, Delaware Co.
24. Darby Creek, Delaware Co.
25. East Branch Octoraro Creek, Lancaster Co.
26. Pequea Creek, Lancaster Co.



Moving into Montgomery County, the East Branch of the Perkiomen is far less fished. Because of stream conditions, the Commission was going to stock more fish, but fishing pressure did not warrant it. The stream is a bit hard to find, but worthwhile. It is stocked from Skippack Road to Bergey's Mill Road near Ledarach. Two stockings occur between the first Monday of the season and May 10, because the water in the stream's lower reaches warms quickly.

Berks County's Allegheny Creek, which parallels Route 568, is stocked one time only in April and does not get much pressure. Also in Berks County and stocked only once in April is Swamp Creek. The stream parallels Route 176 and is stocked to the edge of Morgantown. Like many streams in this section of the state, the stream offers early season fishing only because of rapidly warming water.

Hay Creek, also in Berks County, is stocked from Geigertown for 2.5 miles to its confluence with the Schuylkill River. Between Birdsboro and Geigertown there is a gate closing off a 2.5-mile abandoned stretch of Route 82, allowing walk-in fishing only. With easy walking and stocking truck availability because of the road, Hay Creek provides good fishing with only moderate fishing pressure.

The section of Hay Creek above Geigertown is listed as a Class A Wild Trout stream, carrying wild brown trout. It is important to get permission from the landowner to fish this stretch.

Though we are concentrating on streams open to bait and hardware fishing, Kaufmann thinks that a delayed-harvest stretch of the Little Schuylkill beginning at Route 895 in New Ringgold is worth mentioning. Flowing downstream for 1.7 miles, the special regs section is very scenic and offers wider water than in much of our section of the state. A particularly pleasing aspect of fishing the Little Schuylkill is the fact that it is a trout stream recovering from acid mine drainage. According to Kaufmann, "the stream has made a remarkable recovery since the 1950s."

Bear Creek, paralleling Route 895, is a good choice if the Little Schuylkill is running too high. In addition to open water, there is a short delayed-harvest stretch about one mile west of Auburn.

Also in Schuylkill County is scenic Locust Creek, flowing through Locust Creek State Park and Tuscarora State Park. Kaufmann says that the stream offers a good family fishing situation because camping is available at Locust Lake State Park. Locust Lake is also stocked with trout, enhancing the possibilities for a family outing.

According to Kaufmann, one of the nicest fishing situations in the region is made up of Kistler Creek, Pine Creek, Maiden Creek and Ontelaunee Creek. "That whole valley is stocked," says Kaufmann, "and offers all sizes and types of stream." Kaufmann goes on to explain that Kistler is very small, with Pine being a small to moderate-sized stream. Maiden Creek is wide, and Ontelaunee starts small but gets large.

Ontelaunee, starting in Lehigh County and flowing into Berks, is stocked from a spot near the junction of Route 143 and 309 downstream for 9.3 miles. Kistler Creek, a tributary to Ontelaunee, flows through Kempton, near Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and is stocked for 2.5 miles. Ontelaunee and Kistler creeks become Maiden Creek near Kempton, which is stocked for 4.8 miles. Pine Creek is located about 2.5 miles below Kistler Creek and is stocked for 4 miles as it flows toward Hawk Mountain.

Getting back to the more populated sections of the area, we have some very popular, very heavily fished trout streams–streams like Philadelphia's Wissahickon and Pennypack creeks and Delaware County's Ridley and Darby creeks. These streams are in heavily populated areas, but they are scenic, though crowded. If one can escape work during the week and be on the stream early, nearly all of these streams offer good fishing without large crowds. Because of heavy fishing pressure, the streams are stocked heavily, especially the Wissahickon, so there are plenty of fish to be caught.

Yes, we have lots of people in southeastern Pennsylvania, but we also have a lot of nice trout streams, many of them amazingly underfished. Remember that trout fishing is meant to be fun, not stressful. Get on the stream early and on weekdays as often as possible and you will have the enjoyment you seek.

Anglers Currents



Fish & Boat Commissioner Paul J. Mahon (right) recently gave Governor Robert P. Casey the 1994 fishing license number 1 and a trout/salmon permit. Their Susquehanna River fishing trip was cancelled last season, but both Governor Casey and Commissioner Mahon plan to fish the river this season.

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Bass season this year opens June 18. Stream smallmouths often move from deep water into the shallows during the early evening in search of food. Fish large streamers and poppers along the bank, using a twitch-and-pause retrieve, imitating the baitfish that are so attractive to these predators.

Panfish like the shallow, weedy areas of lakes and ponds because the food they eat lives there. In the spring, they spawn along shorelines, and by walking the banks you can spot their nests, which look like round, light-colored spots against the darker bottom. These spawning beds, of course, are excellent places to fish.

Although they don't get the attention of the more famous mayflies, caddis flies are also very important insects to trout and in many locations are more numerous than mayflies. Carry patterns that imitate the three stages of a caddis fly's life cycle: Larva, pupa and the adult (dry fly). Concentrate on these five main colors: Tan, gray, olive, cream and brown.

illustration- Ted Walke

Float tubes are fun to use and very effective tools for fishing small lakes and ponds. The ability to move quietly into places that are difficult to reach from a large boat, or from the bank, could mean that fish of a lifetime. As a safety precaution, make sure to purchase a float tube with at least two air bladders, often the main tube and a backrest. If a leak develops in one, the second bladder keeps you safely afloat so that you can reach the shore.

Flies that imitate emergers often outproduce a dry fly during a hatch. As the nymph ascends to the surface of the water and struggles from its nymphal shuck, it is most vulnerable to the trout. Floating nymphs and soft-hackle patterns are excellent choices, even if the fish are taking the duns from the surface.

If panfish are not visibly feeding on the surface, tie on a small jig and search out the deep-water side of weed beds. Simply raise and lower your rod tip to jig the fly, varying the depth of the lure after each cast until you begin to catch fish. A slip bobber combined with a mini-jig makes this technique easy and effective.

Beginning fly tiers are often overwhelmed by the thousands of different flies and the vast selection of materials. Pick out a few basic flies that require different tying techniques, and buy only the materials that you need for those flies. Once you master these flies, pick a few more and before you know it your fly tying kit will be fully stocked. The Woolly Bugger, the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear and the Adams are good choices to start with.

PENNSYLVANIA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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Anglers Currents

New Record Category Established

The Commission has moved to recognize the landlocked Atlantic salmon in its Angler Awards program. In the process, the Commission has established a 10.89-pound fish caught in Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County, as the first state record in the new Atlantic salmon category.

The lunker salmon was landed December 22, 1993, by Timothy A. Grace, 46, of Huntingdon. The fish, which hit a spoon, measured 31 inches long with a girth of 15 3/4 inches.

Although there was no category for a state record Atlantic salmon at the time, Grace filed a formal application with the Commission anyway. It turned out to be a wise decision. Unbeknownst to Grace, the Commission was already weighing the possibility of adding the species to its Angler Recognition Program.

"Mr. Grace's application was timely because we were already talking about recognizing the Atlantic salmon. Nobody was really sure if enough quality fish were being caught to merit a new award slot. Then here comes this big fish--we went from debating whether to establish an Atlantic salmon category to discussing how and when to do it," said Dan Tredinnick, Angler Award Coordinator.

According to Tredinnick, certifying Grace's catch took longer than usual. "This was an odd situation because instead of starting from scratch, we opted to acknowledge an already documented catch. By doing so, we wanted to set a high standard that ensured the continued quality of our record program.

"In other words, we didn't think it was appropriate to open up a new category and possibly end up honoring a sub-par fish just because it was the first one that came along. We knew right away Mr. Grace's catch was a quality fish, but we weren't even sure if it was actually the biggest Atlantic salmon we knew about," Tredinnick said.

So the Commission reviewed its files to see if any fish had been submitted for an Atlantic salmon record and if they were indeed bigger than the Raystown catch. There was no documentation for a bigger Atlantic salmon landed in Pennsylvania.

Youth Field Day

The sportsmen of Jefferson County, along with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, are sponsoring a field day for kids on July 17. The field day will be held at Renlow County Park, Reynoldsville, and youth up to age 17 are invited to participate in a day of learning about the outdoors. Many activities are planned, including programs on fishing, boating safety, and the use and safe handling of guns. For more information, and to apply for a registration package, call 1-800-533-6764.

1994 Conservation Leadership School

Do you know a student between the ages of 15 and 18 who is interested in the learning about natural resources and human interaction with the environment? If so, the Penn State Conservation Leadership School may be the place to go. Applications are now being accepted for the two-week residential program, which emphasizes field-based, hands-on learning, group problem solving, and environmental management. The curriculum involves active participation in environmental management, resource assessment, and regenerative conservation methods.

The school is held at the Stone Valley Recreation Area and uses the educational resources of Penn State University. Students work in small groups under the guidance of a faculty member. The curriculum includes courses in watershed management, citizen action, basic ecology, land-use planning, alternative energy supplies, environmental risk assessment, and forest management. Students participating in this two-week course learn to develop effective leadership and communication skills. Graduation is held on the last night of the session and participants receive a certificate of attendance.

The dates for the 1994 schools are: Session I, July 3 through July 16; session II, July 17 through July 30; and advanced session, August 4 through August 13. The advanced session is open only to students who previously attended a regular session.

For more information or an application, contact: Tiffany Shultz, 102 Wagner Building, University Park, PA 16802; phone: (814) 863-0229.

PFD Rules to Change in 1995

The U.S. Coast Guard has issued final rules that revise the requirements to carry personal flotation devices (PFDs) on recreational boats. The rules are designed to encourage more boaters to wear the safety equipment and save lifes.

Under the new rule to take effect May 1, 1995, the Type IV PFD--a throwable flotation device (seat cushion or ring buoy)--can no longer be used as a substitute for a wearable device (Type I, II, III or V). On boats under 16 feet in length, wearable PFDs are required to be carried for each person on board.

The requirement for boats 16 feet and longer remains unchanged. There must be a Type I, II, III or V for each person plus one Type IV throwable PFD on the boat.



On the Water

with Bill Talo

Not a Thing to Wear

Repulsive old hats with forgotten flies or lures stuck in them were prized by a hundred years of fishermen, but nowadays they are as out of date as they look. The tackle part of tackle shops is crowded by what one long-time seller of fine rods, reels and flies now ruefully calls "our dry goods department," where $75 shirts hang next to $200 rainsuits. He says his stylish lady bookkeeper had become his purchasing agent.

"I have found this clothing business is simpler than I had expected," another dealer says. "I don't have any trouble at all as long as the price tag is big enough. These new fishing types aren't looking for bargains. They're looking for class."

Not long ago, a fly fisherman with no patches on his waders was tentatively classed as a beginner, but there's now a tendency to classify a user of patched waders as a sort of backwoods version of a street person.

The tackle part of tackle shops is crowded by what one long-time seller of fine rods, reels and flies now ruefully calls "our dry goods department," where $75 shirts hang next to $200 rainsuits.

It may be that the new waders are indicators for the entire movement, even surpassing ever swifter fishing boats. There was a period of leaking waders, which came in an effort at undercutting some relatively expensive British ones. New materials at one time replaced waders that did not seep, and water sometimes came up almost as fast inside as outside. It was during that experimental period when I acquired how-to fame by posing while testing new waders by sitting in a bathtub. And one famous seller of outdoor equipment advertised "water-resistant" waders, following quite a few returns of unsatisfactory pairs. Then, when anglers suddenly sought only appearance and quality instead of bargains, attractive young ladies did pictorial promotions with aerial splits in waders, and one posed in waders with a rose in her teeth. It was along about then that $200 for waders began to seem about right to the angling public, and few of them leak.

In illustrating stirring prose about fishing adventures, I have appeared in various dramatic photographs and a new acquaintance said he would have known me anywhere.

"You're the one always wearing greasy jeans and landing a fish," he flattered.

I once read that no fishing vest ever had enough pockets. That, of course, was a dated bit of information, and some of the new ones have pockets attached to pockets that are inside other pockets. Of course, they are evidently priced by the pocket. A year ago I received one of the late-model ones as a gift, and I am still looking for a little box of size 18 dry flies that I am sure is in there somewhere. As I recall, I put it into the left of the pocket that holds my insect dope, or line dressing or sunscreen. I started a systematic search but was distracted when I came to a compartment I had not noticed before–a compartment that contained a catalog of a deluxe model of vest with more pockets than mine has.

As a child I was led to believe cotton was an economical material used for things that did not merit silk or wool. I had not learned of oiled or waxed cotton, which has now blossomed in $300 coats that protect you from almost anything the weather can offer.

The old truck innertubes (marginally classified as wearing apparel) that were equipped with rope suspenders and seats and kept some of the more ardent casters afloat long ago have been replaced by miniature yachts that carry handy trays, shelves and all sorts of zippered storage. I knew the new era had come to the "floater bubble" when I saw an angler using one with a towed tender containing refreshments, tape player and the family dog.

For generations, cartoonists have taken maniacal delight in portraying the fully equipped trout fisherman as a befuddled soul wearing a fortune in strange clothing and festooned with strange and expensive gadgets. In several hundred of these illustrations he is teamed with a barefoot boy carrying numerous large trout and a willow pole. In many such social commentaries the fishless expert is furtively offering to purchase a catch from the youngster.

Although I have never bought any fish from barefoot kids, I have on several occasions found myself being inspected warily by persons who obviously have not understood the importance of retractable pliers, woolen patches for holding flies and boots that reach to my chin. It's a relief to find that the expensive sportswear on the racks in front of the tackle counters is now stylish.

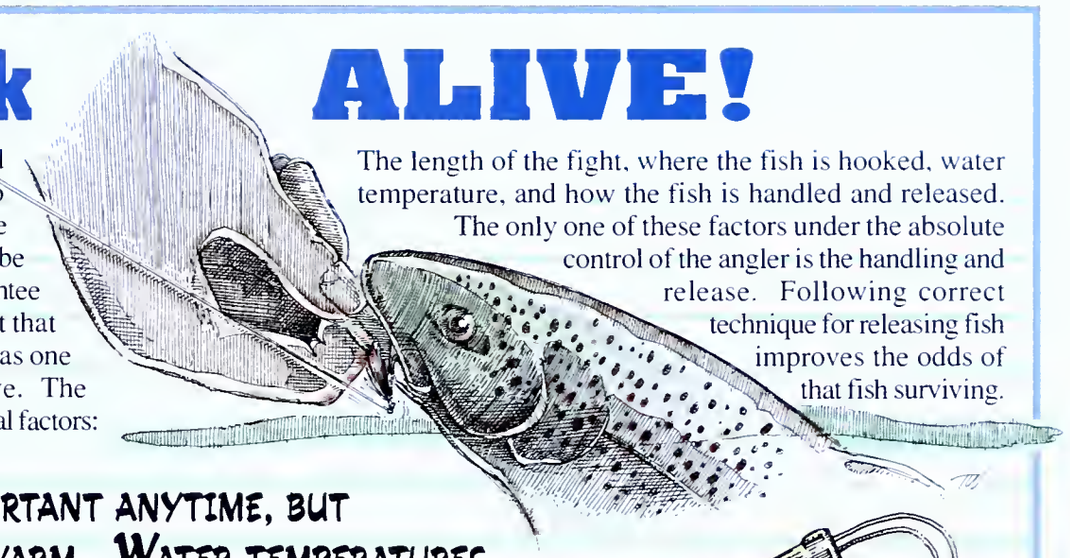
Some new anglers, instead of drawing back from fishing clothing, are looking at shirts embroidered with Royal Coachman flies before they buy their rods.

SMART Angler's Notebook

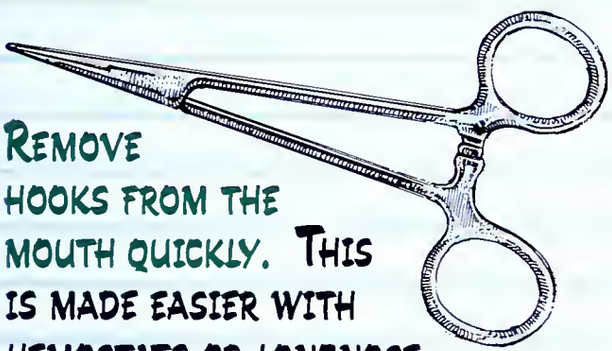
by Carl Richardson

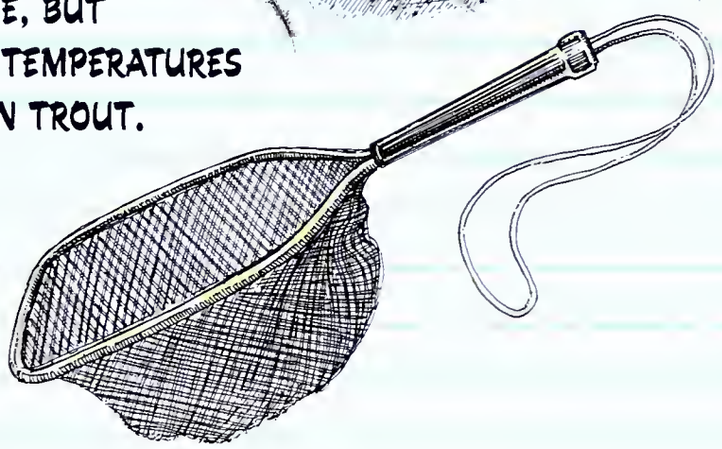
Put 'em Back ALIVE!

Many anglers today release trout and other fish they catch. Most anglers do it for conservation reasons, but there are times when regulations require that fish be released. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee a released fish will live. Studies suggest that of 100 caught and released trout, as few as one or as many as 50 or more won't survive. The number that does survive depends on several factors: The length of the fight, where the fish is hooked, water temperature, and how the fish is handled and released. The only one of these factors under the absolute control of the angler is the handling and release. Following correct technique for releasing fish improves the odds of that fish surviving.



PLAY FISH QUICKLY. IMPORTANT ANYTIME, BUT ESPECIALLY WHEN WATERS WARM. WATER TEMPERATURES OF 70 DEGREES AND WARMER ARE ROUGH ON TROUT.

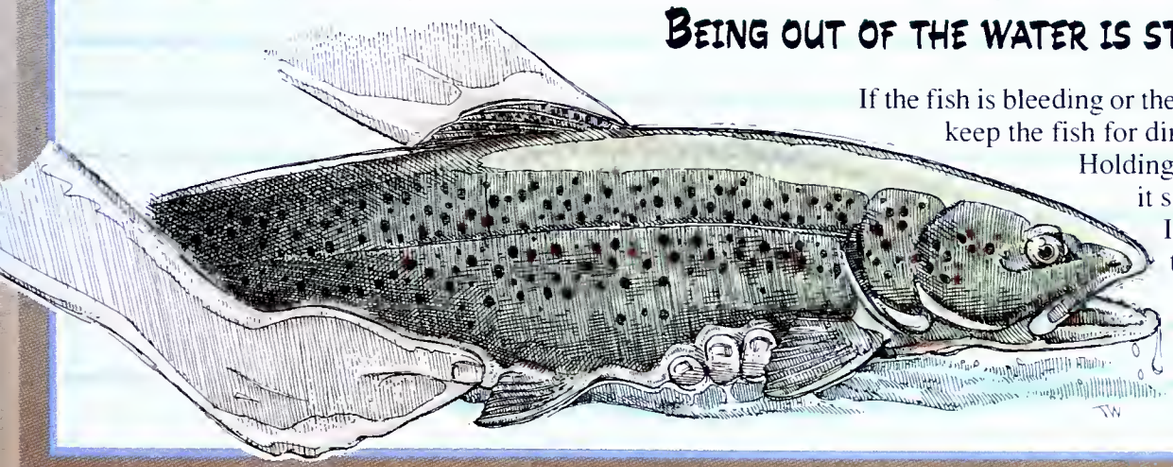




REMOVE HOOKS FROM THE MOUTH QUICKLY. THIS IS MADE EASIER WITH HEMOSTATS OR LONGNOSE PLIERS. CUT THE LINE IF THE FISH IS HOOKED DEEPLY IN THE MOUTH OR THROAT. REMOVING HOOKS FROM DEEP IN THE MOUTH OR THROAT WILL INJURE FISH, AND TAKE VALUABLE TIME. BARBLESS HOOKS MAY BE EASIER TO GET OUT.

A LANDING NET CAN HELP YOU LAND FISH QUICKLY. THE BEST NETS HAVE A SHALLOW BAG MADE OF FINE MESH. IF YOU MUST HANDLE FISH, WET YOUR HANDS FIRST. IT'S BEST FOR THE FISH IF YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF.

KEEP FISH IN WATER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. BEING OUT OF THE WATER IS STRESSFUL FOR FISH.



If the fish is bleeding or there is damage to the gills or eyes, keep the fish for dinner–if regulations allow.

Holding the fish upright underwater, let it swim away under its own power. If necessary, hold the fish out of the current until it revives. Fish that don't recover in a couple of minutes won't. Keep them for the skillet–if regulations allow.

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SECTION

Grass Carp

Six years have passed since the Commission first considered the use of triploid grass carp for aquatic vegetation control. For some time private pond and lake owners and managers have sought an alternative to the use of aquatic herbicides. Today they have a choice.

There is a new fish in the Commonwealth and hopefully it's going to clean things up. Are these fish with the huge appetite as effective as their reputation indicates? Are they the cure-all for all the aquatic plant problems in some of our waters? Perhaps we may be expecting too much from these "underwater lawn mowers" that have evolved to consume specific plants and over time reduce the need to use aquatic herbicides. Will the remedy for the removal of unsightly and restrictive aquatic plants hamper a landowner's ability to rear warm/coolwater fish or an angler's ability to catch fish in a protective habitat? Only time will tell how these herbivorous fish are accepted in the Commonwealth.

Let's take a brief look at the grass carp, or white amur. It belongs to the minnow family and is native to the Amur River in the former U.S.S.R. and Republic of China. It was first introduced into the United States in 1963 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) to study its use in aquatic vegetation control. All indications are that the fish has been doing the job for which it was introduced.



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Grass carp were found to be effective in a wide range of conditions but thrived and grew most successfully in water temperatures of 67 to 90 degrees, and could reach ages of 15 to 20 years and weights of more than 25 pounds. However, as in other fish, water temperature and abundance of food greatly affect the growth potential of triploid grass carp. Specifically, it favors rooted aquatic plants, such as milfoil and curlyleaf pondweed. Thus, the decision whether or not to stock triploids should be influenced by the quality of available food.

If your concern is that the triploid grass carp will reproduce, that possibility is minimized because they are certified sterile. Sterility is caused from shocking fertilized eggs to produce three sets of chromosomes. Hence, the term *triploid*. Biological validation of this sterile condition is done by USF&WS at the production sites before the introduction of each shipment into the state. Only non-reproducing triploid grass carp can be brought into Pennsylvania. An additional safeguard is that stocking will be limited to ponds and lakes to minimize possible escape.

Effective January 1, 1994, it became legal to import, transport and possess triploid grass carp in Pennsylvania. Importation of this species is guided by a strict regulation and permit process. As previously stated, it begins with the USF&WS determination of fertility or sterility. Written certification of triploid condition accompanies each shipment and is provided to the transporter and the Commission. Spot checks of sterile condition and stockings are planned by the Commission's law enforcement personnel to preclude misuse.

To exercise strict control over the entire process, permits are required to transport and stock triploids in the Commonwealth. A stocking permit allows a person for a $20 fee to purchase and stock a pond or lake. Subsequent stockings require a new permit. Trading, exchanging or giving triploids by one owner to another is not allowed. Applications are available by writing to: Triploid Grass Carp Coordinator, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, 450 Robinson Lane, Bellefonte, PA 16823-9620.

Pond owners should remember that "more is better" may not be the solution when considering introducing triploid grass carp into their ponds or lakes. The appropriate stocking rate depends on the size of the water and the amount and kind of aquatic vegetation present. Clearly defined objectives over an extended period should be specified to encourage gradual vegetation control, achieve favorable results, and to preclude excessive costs resulting from purchasing too many fish. Overstocking could lead to total eradication of vegetation. It could also cause a blue or green discoloration of the water caused by algae that grow rapidly from excess nutrients released in the water as the triploids defecate the remains of rooted aquatic plants. This condition could be more unacceptable to a pond owner than the water's original state.

To encourage conservative use, the Commission will allow a maximum stocking rate of no more than 15 triploids per surface acre of water. Also, to allow sufficient time for the initial stocking to take effect, additional stockings may not take place until at least two years have elapsed from the initial stocking date.

The stocking of triploid grass carp should not be looked at as the cure-all for aquatic plant removal. Instead, it is another tool. In some situations it may be necessary to use triploid grass carp in conjunction with aquatic herbicides to provide the most effective results for control of nuisance aquatic plants. One should also consider the factors and events, such as nutrient runoff, that led to the overabundance of aquatic plants and plan to implement conservative corrective action. Then decide if triploid grass carp meet your control objectives.

Collectively, we should protect a most valuable aquatic resource, our ponds and lakes, by using discretion, sound judgment and common sense. No matter what action we take to control unwanted aquatic plants, in the long run a quick, inadequate idea may not be in an owner's best interest and in the interest of resource protection. Seeking professional advice and assistance is encouraged. If you choose to use triploid grass carp for aquatic vegetation control, let your Commission know how things work out. We are eager to hear from you.

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This issue's front-cover largemouth bass was photographed by Wally Eberhart.

Surveys

Every few years we survey *Angler* reader to stay attuned to your fishing and conservation practices and preferences. If your subscription is up for renewal soon, you have probably received a subscriber survey in your renewal notice. If your subscription isn't up for renewal and you'd like to participate in the survey, just send us a request for the survey. Please include a self-addressed, stamped business-sized envelope with your request. The address is *PA Angler* Survey, PA Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. Thank you for helping us with the survey. We'll report the results as soon as we've tallied them.
–Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.

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Lake Arthur's STRIPED THUNDER

by Jeff Knapp

It seems that every species caught in freshwater and subsequently written about has been dubbed the "gamest fish that swims." Despite the widespread nature of this accolade, when such a comment is directed at the hybrid striped bass, not many eyes are raised, at least not by any angler who has ever caught one.

A fish known by a couple of names, the hybrid striper is a cross between a female striped bass and a male white bass. Its aliases included wiper, sunshine bass and hybrid. Some anglers also mistakenly call the fish a striper, a common and understandable occurrence in waters where both purebreds and hybrids are present. The striper handle is also used on waters containing only hybrids, and is simply a case of verbal laziness, one of which I also am guilty.

Over the past few years, nearly 10 of them, I've had the pleasure of catching hybrid stripers from Butler County's Lake Arthur. Arthur is one of the Fish and Boat Commission's best success stories as far as fish stocking is concerned, though the lake is better known for its fine largemouth bass fishery. The fertility of Lake Arthur's waters, coupled with a strong forage base of alewife shad, provides the necessary conditions for healthy populations of several species, hybrids included.

Lake Arthur's hybrid fishery relies entirely on stocking, because the fish are not capable of reproducing naturally, which is the case of most cross breeds. Pennsylvania does not produce its own hybrid striper eggs. Instead, we get them from other states via the barter system. The supply is not great, relatively speaking, and inconsistent as well. Still, according to Area 1 Fisheries Manager Craig Billingsley, Lake Arthur is the agency's priority water to receive hybrid fingerlings in the western part of the state. Billingsley says hybrid eggs are procured on a year-to-year basis, entirely dependent on outside sources.

It would be impractical for Pennsylvania to attempt to hatch its own hybrid eggs because of a lack of brood stock. The states that furnish the Fish and Boat Commission with hybrid eggs have numerous waters with both purebred stripers and white bass from which to acquire breeders.

The initial stocking of hybrids in Lake Arthur took place in 1984. During subsequent years, up until 1991, stockings of some sort took place every year except 1987. The 1986 stocking contained all purebred stripers because hybrids weren't available. The 1991 stocking, comprised of 16,100 fingerlings, was the last one made. Hybrid stocking details for 1994 were not known at press time. Ideally, Billingsley would like to be able to stock 10,000 to 12,000 hybrids per year.

The agency's primary objective for developing a hybrid population in Lake Arthur is aimed at benefiting the angler.

"We wanted to add a new dimension to the Lake Arthur fishery," says Billingsley. "Alewife shad are a very prolific food source, so let's take advantage of it."

According to Billingsley, agency surveys conducted last spring on Lake Arthur revealed strong numbers of three-year-old hybrids. At that time, the fish were in the 15- to 17-inch range. This year hybrids from that year class will measure over 20 inches.

How big do hybrid stripers grow? That's a difficult question to answer. The Commission doesn't maintain state records for cross breeds because of identification problems. I've heard of hybrids over 15 pounds caught from Lake Arthur, and Billingsley also confirmed hearing such reports, saying they came from reliable sources. Such fish would measure in the 30-inch range.

Lake features

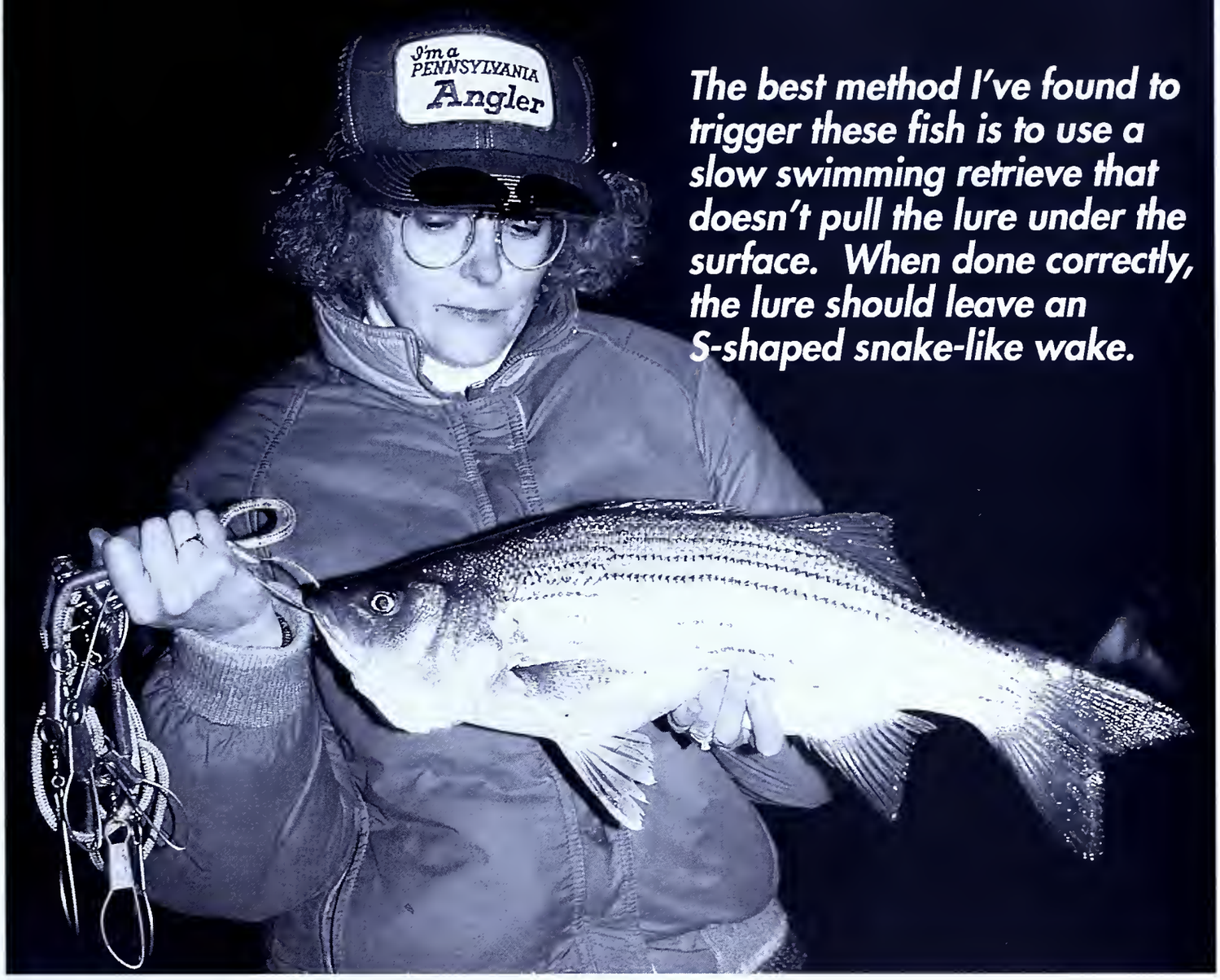
To catch hybrid stripers from Arthur you need to know a little about the lake, and the fish themselves.

Lake Arthur is a relatively shallow, lowland-type lake that covers about 3,300 acres with a maximum depth around 35 feet. A significant chunk of its surface acreage is contained in large bays, ones such as Bear Run, Muddy Creek, Shannon Run, Big Run and Swamp Run. The lake has plenty of shallow feeding shelves, areas that contain newly emerging (in the spring) weedbeds of submergent coontail/milfoil-like weeds.

Striped bass and white bass, the parents of the hybrid striper, are known as aggressive, hard-fighting fish, a characteristic that's passed along to their offspring. Hybrids are efficient, opportunistic feeders, and they grow quickly because of this trait.

The fertility of Lake Arthur's waters, coupled with a strong forage base of alewife shad, provides the necessary conditions for healthy populations of several species, hybrids included.

photo: Jeff Knapp



They are a pelagic species, relating more to food sources than structure and cover.

Route 422 parallels the lake's southern shore. North Shore Drive follows the northern portion of the lake. State Route 528 crosses the lake just downlake of where Shannon Run, Muddy Creek and Swamp Run bays merge.

Shallow-water tactics

Perhaps the greatest joy with hybrid stripers is catching them on or near the surface. This is possible in certain conditions throughout much of the spring and early summer.

At night, at dawn and dusk, and during dark, dreary days, hybrids follow schools of alewives onto shallow feeding flats. Typically, such areas are one to three feet deep and have some weed growth. Feeding forays can last from a few minutes to a couple of hours or more.

Determining whether or not stripers are up and feeding isn't usually a problem. When these fish get rockin'-'n-rollin', the scene fulfills what I would visualize as a pack of hungry piranha gorging themselves, in itself a spectacle I must admit never to having witnessed. Nonetheless, when hybrids are up and at 'em, they churn the water to a froth. There's no mistaking their presence as they slash into schools of bait.

These fish can be frustrating, but when you latch onto one of these finned freight trains, the effort becomes a small price to pay. It's a situation that may best be described in the "some days you get the bear, some days the bear gets you" spirit. I've had nights where my partner and I latched onto several hybrids, and others where for hours they slashed, swirled and turned the water white but wouldn't respond to our offerings. It seems that on some nights you can cast until your arms fall off, but to no avail. Other experienced hybrid anglers I've talked to confirm this experience.

Why is it so difficult to catch hybrids when they are obviously feeding with reckless abandon? My theory is that their food source is so great your lure gets lost. Heck, in two to three hours of casting you'll impale a handful of alewives most nights. I also think that when these feeding sprees get into full swing, the stripers are keyed in on what an alewife (injured perhaps) looks like, and the best-made presentation doesn't trigger a response. It's something dry fly anglers have faced for decades.

Last year Arthur's hybrid striper fishing was the best I have seen in years, and during several spring/early summer trips we caught enough fish to do some comparing. In all instances most of the fish we caught were boated just before dark. It's my thinking that we were catching the early migrators, hybrids moving up onto feeding flats in anticipation of alewife movement. The shad weren't thick yet, and the hybrids responded well to our offerings. See a swirl, make a cast, catch a fish...the way things should be, at least some of the time.

Tactics, presentations

Fishing for shallow hybrids you need to be in position before your quarry's movement. Unlike most forms of fishing, where success depends on your ability to find the fish first, this is a case where you wait for them to come to you.

Lake Arthur's STRIPED THUNDER

Just before sundown I anchor my boat up on a shallow, weedy food shelf I suspect will attract nighttime hybrids. In the 15 minutes or so before dusk settles in, I rig up two rods with the appropriate lures, and lay out a small additional supply of the same. I also quickly organize the boat, stowing tackle boxes in their proper places, getting out nightlights, and making sure the landing net is accessible and not tangled in the other dozen fishing rods I seem to find necessary to cart along.

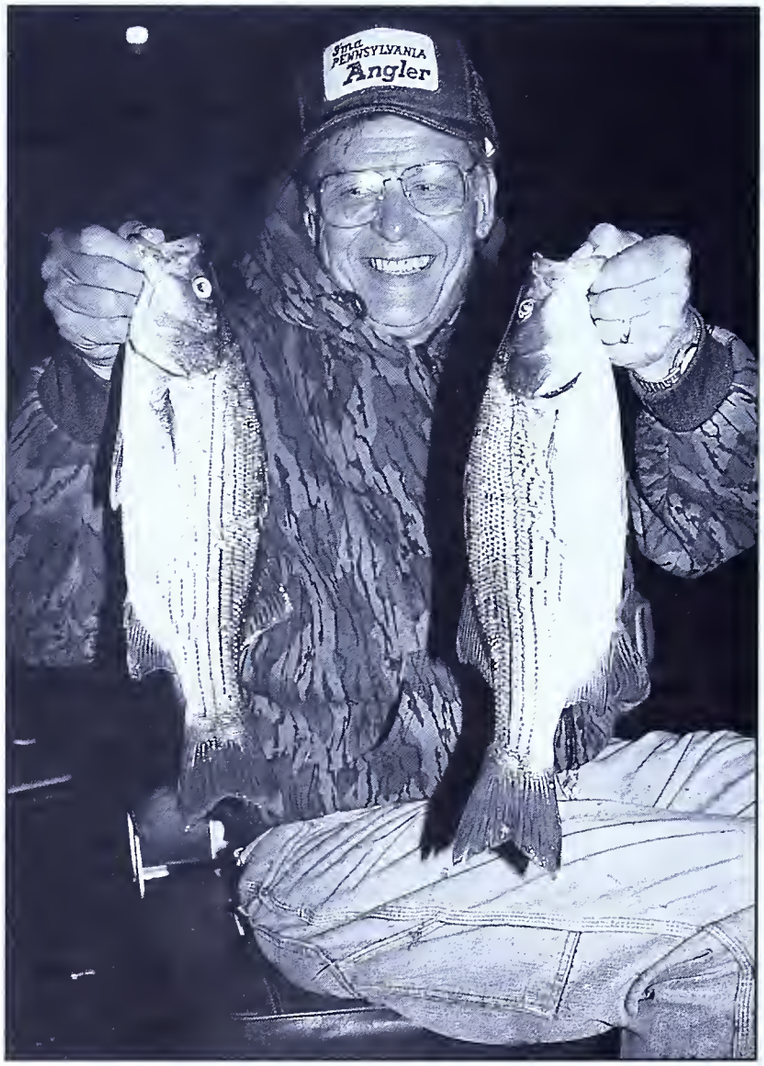
These days, lure selection is simple. It comes from frustrating nights of throwing everything in the box at feeding hybrids, resulting in a long list of ineffective lures. I now stick with the reliable producers and experiment less.

I rig up two rods. One is a 6 1/2-foot medium-action spinning rod teamed with a good quality spinning reel capable of long-distance casts. The reel is spooled with a top-grade 8-pound-test monofilament. It's important that you keep things properly maintained so your casts reach their maximum distance. Hybrids are spooky, and despite their aggressive nature, they seem to keep their distance from the boat.

To the spinning outfit I attach a minnow-shaped lure, generally a jointed variety. I like the black top/silver-sided model best, then the chartreuse top/silver-sided version. Use no additional weight.

These are my confidence baits, but the retrieve is perhaps the more important factor. The best method I've found to trigger these fish is to use a slow, swimming retrieve that doesn't pull the lure under the surface. When done correctly, the lure should leave an S-shaped snake-like wake.

My second rod is a 6 1/2-foot medium action two-handed casting outfit spooled with either 10- or 12-pound test. My lure of choice for this outfit is a Zara Spook. One of the advantages of the Spook is that it can be cast a country mile. Use the standard walk-the-dog retrieve. It's been my experience that the Spook is most effective during dusk, not after nightfall. In the case of either type of lure, most strikes occur within the first few turns of the reel handle.



As was mentioned, some fast hybrid action can be had during the twilight "witching hour." On most nights, once darkness settles in and schools of baitfish move shallow, numbers of feeding hybrids will follow. Sometimes this happens a half-hour after darkness sets in. Other times it may be midnight or later. My partners and I have witnessed the fiercest nighttime activity on clear, moonlit nights. Even though the gravitational effect of the moon may influence hybrid activity, it seems that the illumination it provides is a bigger factor. We've seen activity quiet dramatically when cloud cover darkened the moon.

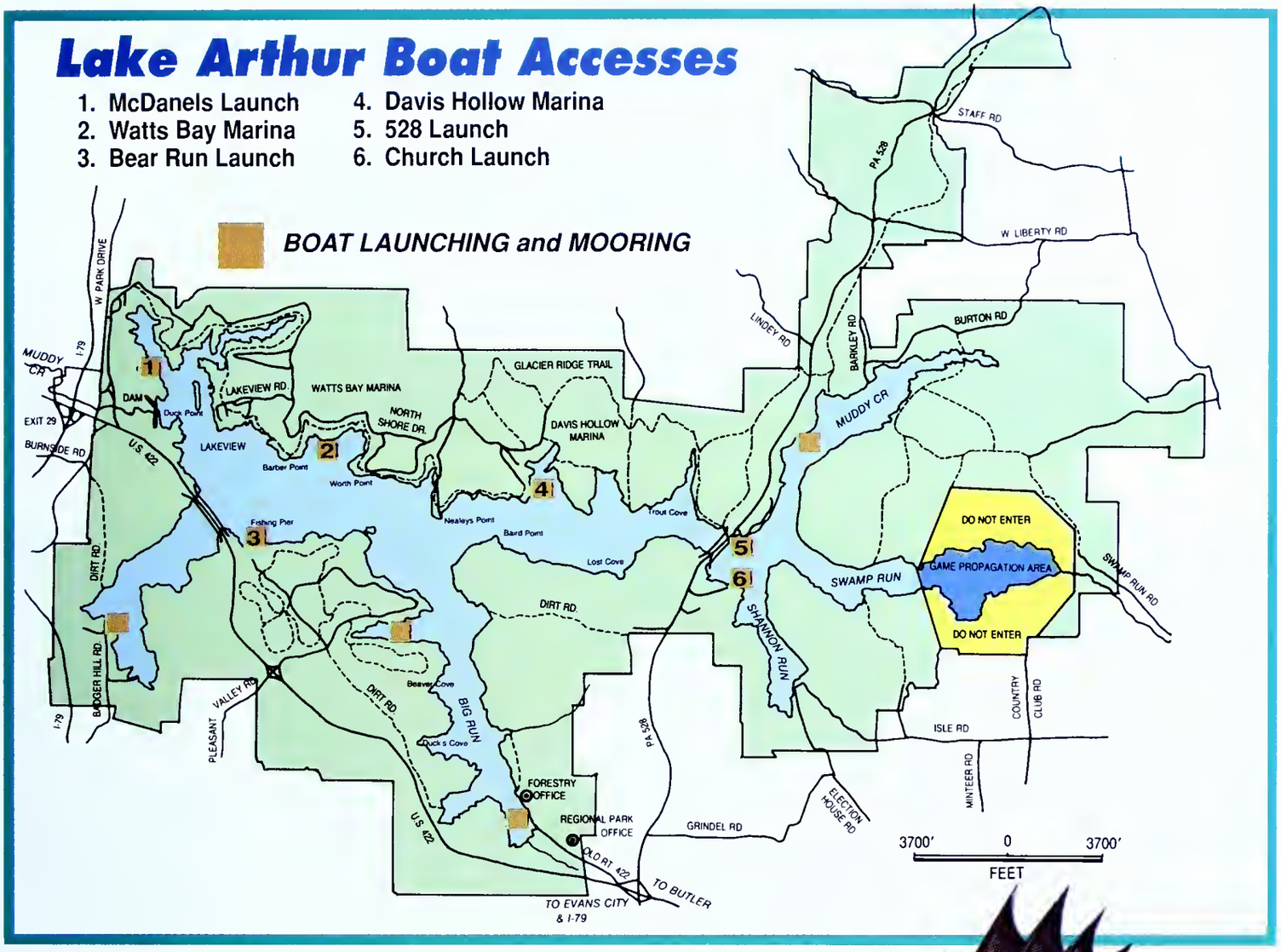
These tactics-related comments have been directed toward twilight/nighttime fishing, during extremely dark, drizzly days, but hybrids can be caught shallow, though you may not witness any visible feeding activity. I've caught some dandy stripers under such conditions, when actually targeting walleyes. It could be that the fish simply hold in shallower water under extremely low-light daytime conditions, instead of moving offshore.

Other tactics

As a matter of personal preference, I like to fish for Arthur's hybrids in the conditions and with the methods previously described. But other tactics work, and perhaps take bigger fish.

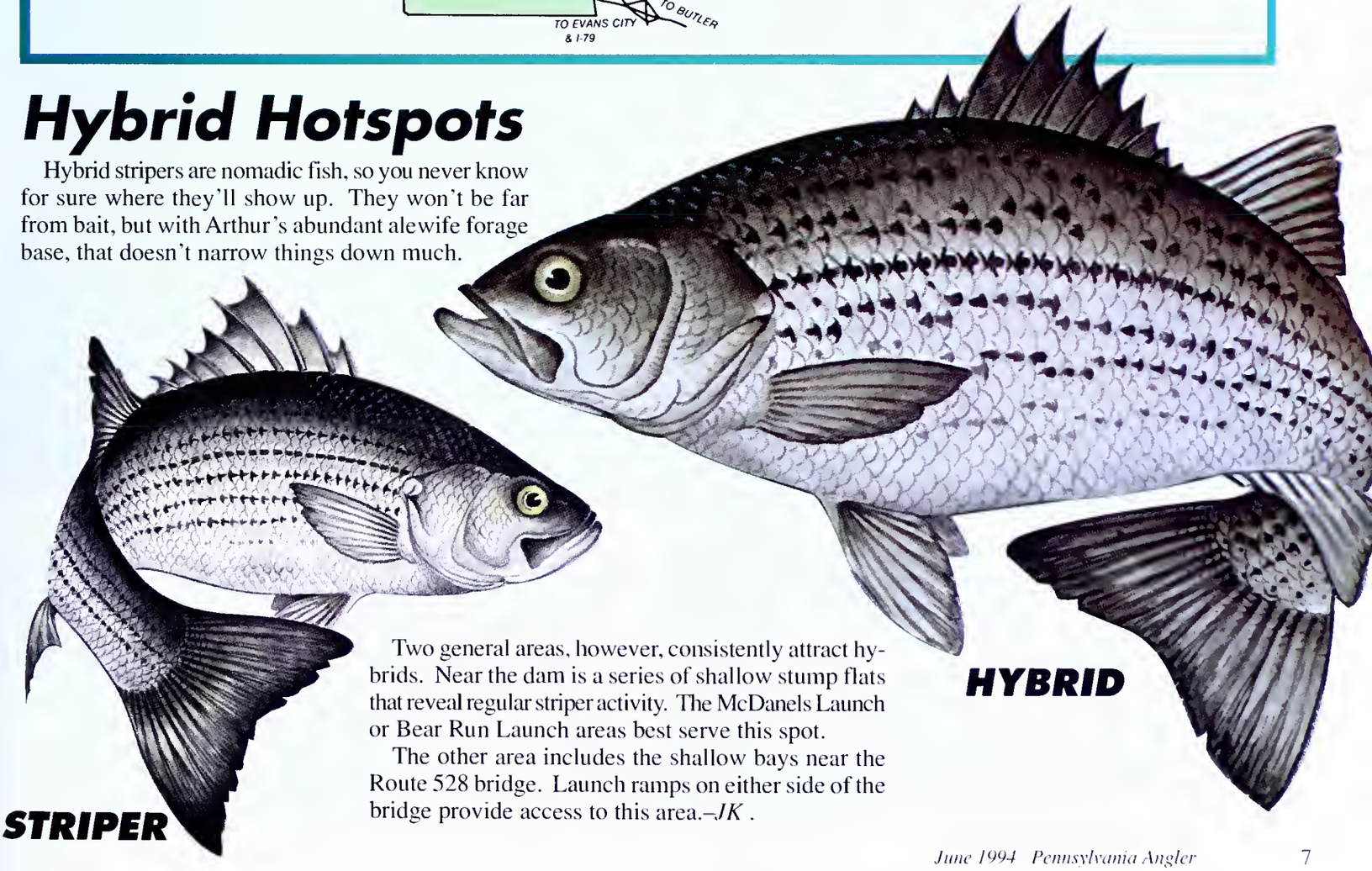
One of my fishing acquaintances, Robert Berry, has taken numerous hybrids over 10 pounds by fishing live bait under a slip-bobber system. Berry has located an area of submerged timber in a large bay, and the spot consistently produces big hybrid stripers as well as other gamefish. Robert finds that sometimes the hybrids respond to large shiners. At other times they ignore the shiners but hit a small fathead minnow more appropriate for crappies.

Current regulations permit hybrid striper fishing year-round. The creel limit is two fish, 15-inch minimum size. A proposal now considered would increase the minimum size to 20 inches, something that would make better use of a somewhat limited resource that has the potential to grow (quickly) to lengths much larger than 15 inches. The new regulation, if approved, will go into effect next season.



Hybrid Hotspots

Hybrid stripers are nomadic fish, so you never know for sure where they'll show up. They won't be far from bait, but with Arthur's abundant alewife forage base, that doesn't narrow things down much.

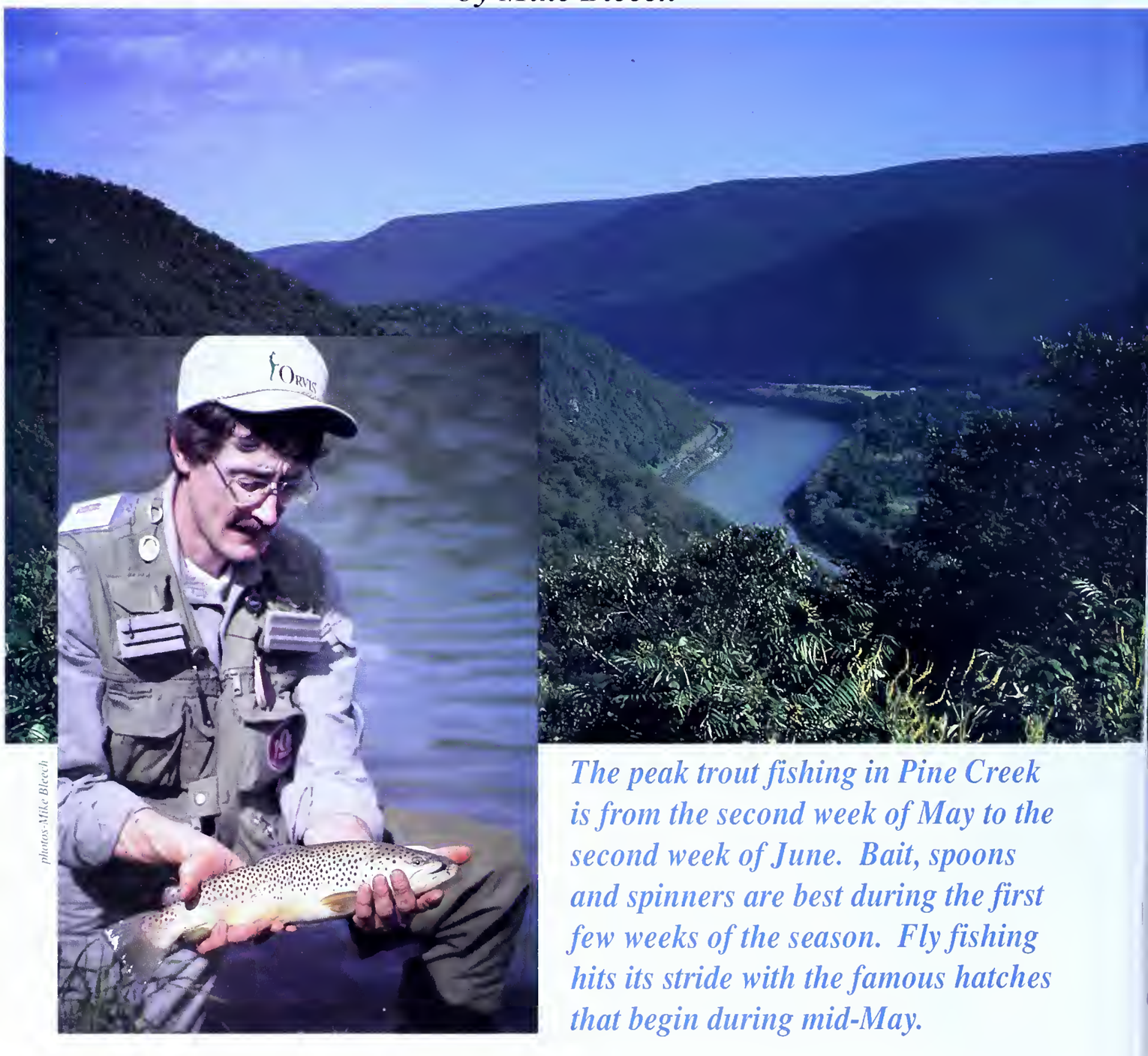


Two general areas, however, consistently attract hybrids. Near the dam is a series of shallow stump flats that reveal regular striper activity. The McDanels Launch or Bear Run Launch areas best serve this spot.

The other area includes the shallow bays near the Route 528 bridge. Launch ramps on either side of the bridge provide access to this area.–*JK*.

Branches of the West Branch

by Mike Bleech



photos: Mike Bleech

The peak trout fishing in Pine Creek is from the second week of May to the second week of June. Bait, spoons and spinners are best during the first few weeks of the season. Fly fishing hits its stride with the famous hatches that begin during mid-May.



The silk of elm spanworms covered the front of my van like a grotesque cocoon. When I opened the door I had to fight my way through it, then again when I opened the side door to get my fishing gear. According to the radio, local towns were reporting temperatures in the 90s, but where I was in the narrow valley along a hemlock-lined creek, it was comfortably cooler and less humid. Hemlocks are nature's air conditioners.

Since spring my wife, Jeri, and I had been working on a project of visiting and fishing some of those northern branches of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River that are cherished by trout anglers as some of the finest freestone creeks in the state. Flowing southward through the Allegheny Highlands, their waters are still chilly when most creeks in the state are too warm to support wild trout. Their banks, to a great extent, are publicly owned, so we can roam as we please.

As I wrote the final entry in a journal of the journey while sitting beside a beautiful creek, listening to the babbling water and several scolding blue jays, I appreciated what the highlands had shared with us. We enjoyed some superb fishing, met some really nice people, and beat the sweltering summer heat.

Here are excerpts from the journal of our tour of the branches of the West Branch, concentrating on tips for fishing these waters from local experts. I thank them for sharing their knowledge. I hope this information helps you enjoy your own visit.

Lycoming, Loyalsock creeks

"You can't pick just one part of this stream and say it's the best part because so much of it is good. It's really a nice stream," said Len Sherlinski, a friendly angler I met at Bodines Bridge. I watched him release the last of eight trout he caught that morning from Lycoming Creek, all on a dry Black Caddis.

"I always find those caddises work best for me," he said.

Sherlinski lives near both Lycoming Creek and Loyalsock Creek. Of the two he prefers Lycoming Creek. The Loyalsock is more acidic, he said, and it has less trout holdover. Lycoming Creek has better public access.

He does not fish during the first few weeks of the trout season, waiting instead until the season opening crowds thin and the water warms a bit. The peak fishing, particularly fly fishing, occurs during May and June. When the water warms during July and August, Sherlinski moves upstream, near the mouth of Pleasant Stream. Gray's Run, Rock Run and Pleasant Stream are smaller tributaries where the water remains cool through summer.

"They have a nice brookie population in here," he noted. "A lot of people don't know that. A lot of people don't know how good this creek is."

Loyalsock Creek has its followers, to be sure. But one glaring shortcoming at this good-looking water is access. A large portion of the creek is posted. Jeri and I drove by some great-looking water that we could not fish.

When we did find a place to stop, we thought we had found the motherlode. Our first three casts produced trout. Two struck Jeri's small spinner, one attacked my tiny spoon. We each missed a couple of hits immediately following those fish, but then the action abruptly stopped. Apparently we arrived just before the end of something. But rather than bemoan our misfortune at missing most of the bite, we had a good laugh over our brief bit of very good luck.

This was a fact-finding mission, not a fishing vacation. So we spent far more time investigating than fishing. Most of our time was spent looking at as much water as possible, looking for and talking to local experts, and taking brief samples of the fishing at numerous places rather than doing any serious fishing in any one stretch of water. But I can not imagine a better place to work.

One of the better places on Loyalsock Creek is a delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only section running 1.4 miles downstream from the Lycoming County line.

Branches of the West Branch



View of Pine Creek Gorge from Colton Point State Park.

Pine Creek

Jeri and I started our day by touring the west rim of the Pine Creek Gorge. That, I think, is the best place to see the gorge. Traffic was light along the winding dirt road, after we got south of Colton Point State Park. Fishing is fine in this stretch for both trout and for smallmouth bass, but if you do not float it the walk is awfully long, or terribly steep to reach the interior.

The road drops near the creek by Blackwell, and we started fishing. A chalk board listing stream temperatures and hatches caught our attention at Wolf's General Store. We walked downstairs to Slate Run Tackle and chatted with Rich Zigarski, who lives in Slate Run.

The peak trout fishing in Pine Creek is from the second week of May to the second week of June, Zigarski explained. Earlier in the season the water is crowded with anglers, and the "stockies" are fresh out of the white trucks. Bait, spoons and spinners are best during the first few weeks of the season. Fly fishing hits its stride with the famous hatches that begin during mid-May.

"When it gets warm like this the fishing really slows in the big creek," Zigarski said.

Most serious anglers head for feeder creeks during summer when the main creek gets warm. A trophy-trout section on Cedar Run and a fly-fishing-only section on Slate Run are excellent places.

"There are native streams with wild brook trout all over the region," Zigarski said.

Even though many anglers abandon Pine Creek during summer, Zigarski reminded me that hatches still come off, and he still has good fishing. Flies that imitate midge larvae are good at this time.

"The best time for fishing is 5:30 in the morning to 9:30," he advised. "In the evening, don't bother getting out until 8 o'clock."

Early in the morning, the water temperature will be about 69 degrees. By late afternoon the sun will have warmed it to 75 degrees, which is too warm for trout to be active.

"Fall fishing is really good," Zigarski said in a tone that left no doubt about his zest for fall fishing in Pine Creek.

In the fall, water temperatures get back into the trout comfort zone. Where you might have sworn there were no trout left in August, in October the creek teems with trout.



Dry Run, Sullivan County.

photos-Mike Bleech

Kettle Creek

There is no sign where one once hung over the gas pumps, but a slate hanging by the door tells anglers that the appropriate flies for the day are a Light Cahill, Cream Cahill, Brown Drake, BWO, Green Caddis, and Tan Caddis. It is the weekend of the annual snake round-up at Cross Fork, so the percentage of trout anglers in town is considerably less than usual. Jeri and I ducked into the fly shop for breakfast and advice.

"I live here for one reason," said Charles Stone, owner of the establishment. "I can fish here 12 months a year."

Stoney's former job as a trucking company troubleshooter took him all over the country, allowing him to sample his passions for fly fishing and waterfowl hunting in many of the best places in North America. But it is here along Kettle Creek, where he has been fishing since the 1950s, that he chose to settle.

"I've never seen Kettle Creek unfishable for more than two, or three, or four days at a time. There are more fishable days on this creek than any other stream that I have fished in the eastern United States!" Stoney claimed.

Kettle Creek is surrounded by forest. Rainfall does not run off tree-covered soil as quickly as it does over developed areas, so runoff is less severe and not as muddy. The rainfall seeps into underground aquifers, where it is released from springs to keep stream flow relatively high and cool during summer.

Stoney begins trout fishing about the last week of February. Good fishing continues through the last week of June. After a lull while the water in the big creek is too warm for much trout activity, it recovers in September. He stays on the creek until mid-November.

"If I had to choose, it would be from the second week in May to the second week in June," he suggested as the peak time.

Special-regulations areas allow trout fishing anytime. One such place is a 1.7-mile long catch-and-release area on Kettle Creek, near the Route 144 bridge in Potter County. Check your summary for others nearby.

"If you are going to fish Kettle Creek, fish between Oleona and Hammersley Fork," Stoney advised. "One section is basically as good as another section. What I tell people is, if you can see the creek from the highway, keep driving. The best fishing is away from the highway."

Stoney proudly announced that there are no posted signs on the Kettle Creek watershed in Potter County.

First Fork of the Sinnemahoning

As the late-afternoon sun disappeared behind the steep hill, anglers were gathering along the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only section on the First Fork of Sinnemahoning Creek, not far upstream from the George B. Stevenson Dam. A brood of common mergansers appeared to be doing its best to terrorize all the trout in the most popular pool.

I climbed down the bank to the creek and took my place among the dozen other anglers in sight. This tour of the branches of the West Branch had taken me through some of the prettiest country in Pennsylvania, along some of the best trout creeks, but I had spent far more time interviewing local anglers and driving than fishing. I needed some time on the water.

But not there! The long pool was attracting more attention than any other place that Jeri and I had seen in the past few days. What we needed was a few fish and a stretch of creek to ourselves. So I will not tell you where we finished our trek along the branches of the West Branch. But I will leave you with a reassuring message.

There are plenty of places where you can get away from it all along these creeks and their smaller tributaries. After the first few weeks of trout season, many of these small creeks, and even many pools on the big creeks, aren't visited by an angler for days at a time, even for weeks at some of the more remote creeks.

The peak time for spinning and baitfishing is generally from the trout season opener until mid-June. The water is usually quite cold during the first two or three weeks of the season, so there is no need to be in a hurry. If you want to plan a weekend, or longer visit to these Allegheny Highlands creeks, you can avoid the most congested conditions and probably have more pleasant weather if you wait until May.

The legendary insect hatches peak during May and June, the time most serious fly fishermen prefer to be here. Hatch dates are readily available in books and at fly fishing shops in the area. Check the back covers of the January 1993 and June 1993 *Pennsylvania Anglers* for more specific hatch information.

You won't have any trouble locating tackle shops in this area. In fact, in few parts of the country can you find such a great selection of good flies and other tackle scattered in so many out-of-the-way places.

During summer the brooks that flow into the major creeks are much cooler than most other streams in the state, and it follows that trout fishing is correspondingly better. This is difficult fishing in low, clear water for educated trout. Flies that imitate terrestrial insects are the way to go. Last summer elm spanworm imitations were hot.

Fall is another outstanding time to fish these waters, where it is allowed. This is another good opportunity for spinning lures or bait, especially when rains raise the flow and give it some color.

Spring, summer or fall fishing is fine in the branches of the West Branch. First-time visitors are always surprised that such back-country exists in Pennsylvania. These creeks drain most of the highest land in the state. The surrounding forest allows the water cycle to go on in a natural manner, which tempers rainstorms and provides cool springwater to feed these creeks through the hot summer months.

Life goes on at a different pace here than in more heavily populated, more developed areas. The place has a soothing effect. I think they should place a sign along every road leading into the highlands saying "Slow down, you're here." Take time to look around. Wildlife is abundant. We spent some time each day birdwatching, and we saw two bears.

Jeri and I camped during our tour. Several state parks, other campgrounds and abundant state forest land make camping easy and inexpensive. Other accommodations ranging from cabins to motels to fishing lodges are also available.

More Information

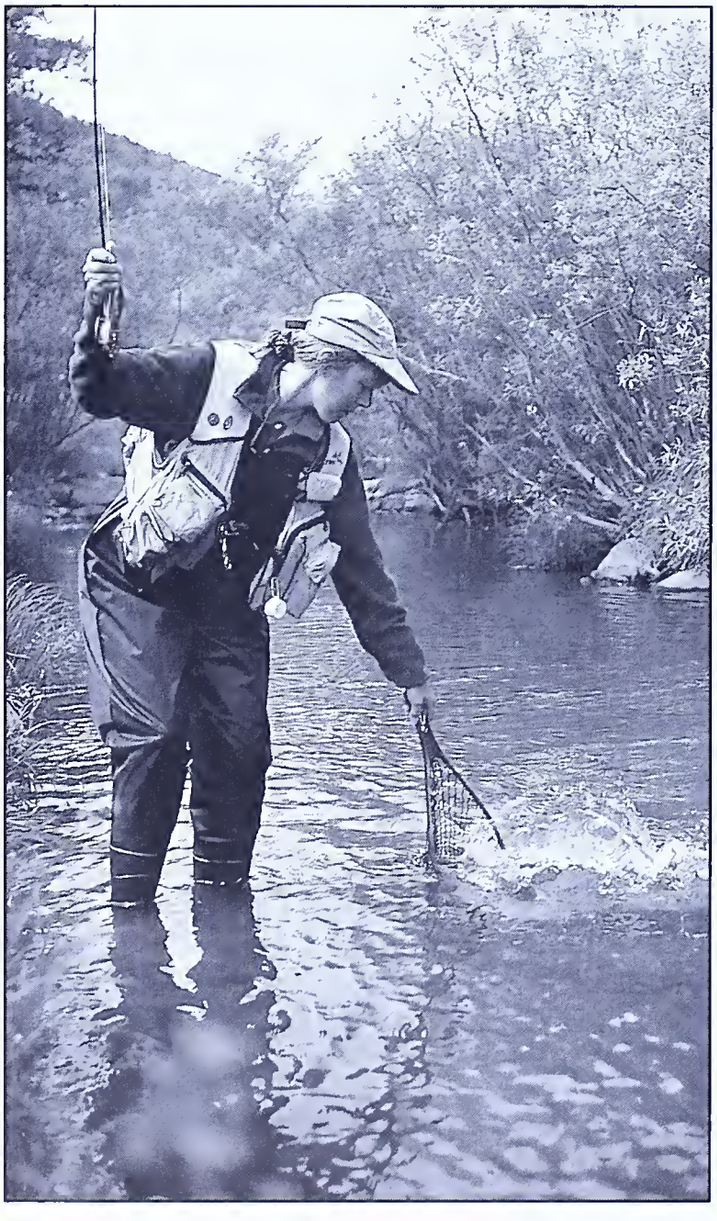
For more details on the areas covered in this article, contact:

• Tioga County Association for Recreation & Tourism, Courthouse Annex, Wellsboro, PA 16901; phone: 717-724-2352

• Potter County Recreation, Inc., P.O. Box 245, Coudersport, PA 16915-0245; phone: 814-435-2394.–*MB*.

The DRAKE that Gets No Respect

by Charles R. Meck



The dramatic, often explosive green drake hatch ended on many state streams more than two weeks ago. Immense numbers of brown drake female spinners completed their annual cycle just three weeks ago. Spectacular sulphur hatches have diminished to just mediocre numbers, not producing the number of rising trout they did just a couple of weeks ago. Most large mayfly, stonefly and caddisfly hatches have ended for the season. It's now late June and you have to satisfy your matching-the-hatch appetite on Pennsylvania trout streams for the remainder of the season with tiny hatches like tricos and blue quills. That's how many anglers respond to thoughts of midsummer fly fishing.

But wait! A close relative to the green and brown drake, the yellow drake, first makes its appearance in mid-June and continues to emerge well into July. Contrary to what some anglers think, this large mayfly doesn't limit its range only to the marginal trout streams in the state, and you find this pale yellow mayfly, matched with a long shank size 12 hook, common in all areas of the state.

Why, then, doesn't this hatch get the respect it sometimes deserves? First, the yellow drake never does appear in the incredible numbers of the green and brown drakes. Second, many fly fishers think they won't find this drake as common as the other two. Third, the yellow drake appears in mid-summer, well after some anglers have quit trout fishing for the year. Finally, many waters on which this drake appears have risen above 70 degrees by late June and into the danger zone for trout.

Some anglers denigrate yellow drakes because the hatch doesn't appear in the heavy numbers reminiscent of the green or brown drake. If you've ever experienced the green drake on Penns Creek or the Little Juniata River, you know what a heavy mayfly hatch means. I've fished the dun and spinner fall on Penns Creek for more than 30 years. Several times while in the midst of a substantial spinner fall of coffin flies, the mating adult of the green drake, I've quit fishing. Why? In every square foot of water 10 to 20 naturals floated on the surface. What chance did I have competing with this plethora of spent spinners?

Look at a brown drake spinner fall on Pine Creek. Fifteen years ago near the town of Cedar Run, I saw brown drake spinners flying just above the surface in unbelievably heavy numbers. A quick glance up and down the stream during the height of that spinner fall revealed more than 100 trout rising for the spent mayflies. Hatches the past few years haven't measured up to those found on the stream a decade or more ago.

You're in for a letdown if you try to compare those massive hatches with the less spectacular yellow drake. The yellow drake just doesn't emerge in the numbers the other two do.

photo-Barry & Cathy Beck



Yellow drake dun

photo-Greg Hoover

Yellow Drake

Hook: Mustad size 12, 9483.
Wing: Pale-yellow mallard flank.
Body: Pale-yellow poly, dubbed.
Legs: Pale-yellow hackle with a turn of grizzly hackle in front.
Tail: Grizzly hackle fibers dyed pale yellow.

I suggested that fly fishers believe they won't find as many streams holding yellow drake hatches as those holding green and brown drakes. That's not totally correct. Because the hatch occurs so late in the season and has so few followers, few anglers actually know where to fish the hatch. You find the hatch common on streams and rivers throughout the state.

By mid-June many anglers have quit fly fishing for the year. Forty years ago the trout season ended in the state in early July. With more liberal fishing seasons, anglers can now fish hatches they couldn't fish back then. The yellow drake ranks as one of the most important hatches that few Pennsylvania anglers fly fished over until the last few decades. In very few instances have I ever witnessed fly fishers actually planning a fishing trip around the yellow drake.

Look at the fourth reason for it secondary status. The Bald Eagle in central Pennsylvania near Julian holds a generous hatch of yellow drakes. Visit any long, slow stretch on the stream at dusk in mid-June and you see generous numbers of drakes appearing. But by that time of year the Bald Eagle has warmed into the high 70s and often you find only smallmouth bass rising to the hatch. However, you also often find the hatch on much cooler waters like Fishing Creek in Columbia County, Sixmile Run and the lower Bald Eagle in Centre County and the Bald Eagle in Blair County. Water temperatures on these four waters in late June often remain below 70 degrees. Plan to fish the yellow drake hatch then on a stream that holds cool water and trout in mid-June.

Remember two important ingredients when looking for and fishing a yellow drake hatch. Before you fish the hatch, make certain you check the water temperature. If it's below 70 degrees you might be in for a great mid-season matching-the-hatch episode. If you have a temperature well above 70, look for the hatch on another stream or a cooler part of the same stream.

Remember a second ingredient for locating a fishable hatch of drakes. This drake more than the other two prefers a slower water velocity and a finer gravel substrate, so look for a stream or river that holds plenty of slow water. Fishing Creek in Columbia County held great hatches of yellow drakes for years. I can



photo-Charles R. Meck

Yellow Drake tied parachute-style



photo-Charles R. Meck

Effective Yellow Drake pattern

The DRAKE that Gets No Respect

remember fly fishing on this freestone in early July in neoprene waders to protect me from the extremely cold water temperatures that never rose above the low 60s. For three weeks in late June and early July, Dick Mills of Dallas and I fished this hatch in complete seclusion—not one other angler fished the hatch on that stream. We fished the hatch on long, slow pools above Benton. The ravages of hurricane-created floods have devastated many of these pools and consequently the yellow drake now appears in smaller numbers on Fishing Creek.

Look also at Bowman Creek north of Wilkes-Barre. Here's a topnotch freestone trout stream that boasts fairly cool temperatures for much of the summer. Look for long, slow sections with fine gravel and you'll hit yellow drakes on some sections of this stream. Tom Bean and I regularly fished the yellow drake hatch just a couple of miles below Noxen. Nightly we hit hatches for more than a week in late June. On several of those trips, Tom and I landed heavy Bowman Creek browns over 18 inches long.

The Bald Eagle Creek near Vail in Blair County holds a good yellow drake hatch on some of its slower pools. For several years Jim Heltzel and I fished this hatch. Because of its fairly large size, the yellow drakes bring some lunkers to the surface. We've caught several trout over 16 inches long on the Bald Eagle on Yellow Drake dry flies.

You're still not convinced that you'll find the drake on many Keystone State streams? The Loyalsock, Muncy and Yellow Breeches creeks also hold fishable hatches. Scott Loughner of West Newton annually fishes the yellow drake hatch on the Yellow Breeches near Allenberry. In late June he often hits a decent hatch and plenty of trout rising to it. Greg Hoover, a writer and noted Penn State entomologist, has found a good supply of burrowing yellow drake nymphs on the Loyalsock. However, by late June many parts of the Loyalsock warm well above 70 degrees.

Recently, sections of the lower end of Falling Springs in Chambersburg have added a hatch of yellow drakes. Ken Rictor and "Bugs" Stevens, both of Chambersburg, report a decent drake hatch in early to mid-June on this famous limestone stream.

Even rivers that have just recently returned from bouts with pollution boast hatches of yellow drakes. Both the Little Juniata and Youghiogheny rivers hold drakes. Because it's a tailwater with cold temperatures all summer long, hatches on the Youghiogheny River occur a few days later than normal. Throughout the month of July, you find sporadic evening hatches of drakes on the Youghiogheny. Of the two rivers, you find the better hatch on the Little Juniata.

Annually Danny Deters, Ed Gunnett and I hit the yellow drake hatch on central Pennsylvania's Little Juniata River. We meet usually around June 20 at 7:00 p.m. We select a section of the river that holds some slow water and then we wait for the hatch to appear near dusk. Whether we fish the river above the town of Spruce Creek or downriver near Petersburg, we often hit fishable hatches of yellow drakes. All three of us have caught some heavy late-season browns on the hatch. For more than a week after the hatch appears, we can cast to trout rising to the hatch. Again, we seldom see other anglers fishing this hatch.

Southeastern Pennsylvania streams like Tulpehocken Creek harbor some yellow drakes. If late-June temperatures don't rise too high on this tailwater, you see trout rising to this dusk emerger.

So no matter what region of the state you plan to fish in mid-June to late June you can find a hatch of yellow drakes. As I said before, don't expect to see the spectacular display of numbers like the green and brown drakes produce—you won't find them. But at a time of the trout season when most major hatches have ended, the yellow drake produces plenty of matching-the-hatch opportunities for fly fishers.

Maybe now I've convinced you that you should attempt to fish when the yellow drake emerges. But you still have questions like, what time of day do most of the mayflies appear and what type of water should you fish the hatch?

Anglers will find the time of day that the yellow drake hatches much more predictable than the green or brown drake. I have observed yellow drakes emerging on two streams for several years. The vast majority of these mayflies emerged from 8:30 to 9:00 p.m. Very few appeared above the surface before that time. Those that did usually ended up in the mouth of a flycatcher. Bats caught many of those that appeared later than 9:00 p.m. I charted the number of drakes that appeared on two central Pennsylvania streams. The hatch peaked several days earlier on the Bald Eagle than it did on Sixmile Run because of colder air and water temperatures on the latter. In those observations I found that the hatch lasts for an unusually long number of days, but the heaviest fishable hatches last for only a few. The closer you fish to the peak emergence, or those days when the highest numbers appear, the better your chances of fishing over trout rising to the hatch. It follows perfect logic that the more yellow drakes on the surface, the more likely you'll see trout rising to them.

You won't find many yellow drakes emerging in very fast water. Look for the hatch on a long, slow pool. Get set for the hatch just below the place where the riffle runs into this pool. Then move up or down the pool when trout begin rising to emerging duns.

Last evening's duns become tonight's spinners. These spinners often meet over the water near 8:45 p.m. If you search the surface after dark, you find that many of these have found their way to the surface.

The pale tannish burrowing nymph of the yellow drake looks much like its close relative, the green drake. I had few instances where I felt I needed a copy of the larva.

My Yellow Drake pattern, tied on a long shank size 12 hook, has pale-yellow hackle, a tail of ginger, a body of pale-yellow dubbing material like polypropylene and wings of pale-yellow mallard flank, divided. If you don't have a copy of the Yellow Drake, a Light Cahill will work. Remember that the legs, wings and body of this mayfly appear pale yellow. The wings, front legs and tails have darker markings.

It's mid-June—what fly fishing plans do you have for the next few weeks? Will you, too, have ended your fly fishing because green and brown drakes as well as most other mayfly, stonefly and caddisfly hatches have ended for the season? Or will you search for some cool water and long, slow pools, tie on a size 12 Yellow Drake pattern and wait for the midsummer drake to appear near dusk? Just experience one or two successful matching-the-hatch episodes with this mayfly and you also will wonder why the yellow drake gets no respect.



photo-Ed Jaworoski

Smallmouth Nymphing

by Harry W. Murray

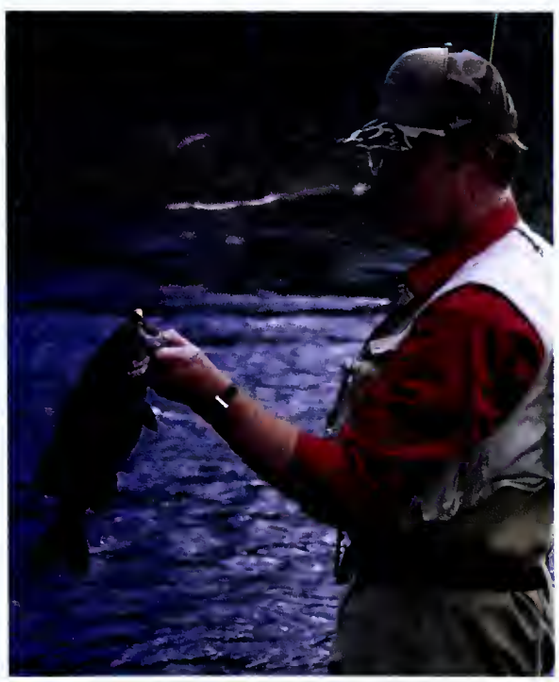


photo-Harry W. Murray

Fly fishing for smallmouth bass with nymphs is one of the fastest growing forms of angling in Pennsylvania, and justifiably so. These imitations of aquatic insects frequently fool worthy bass when other flies and lures fail. The primary reasons for this phenomenal success are that fly tiers have been able to develop patterns that successfully mimic the natural insects in appearance and action, and that fly fishermen can actually make the nymphs behave in a realistic manner in the streams.

To take advantage of this approach, let's examine some of the tactics and nymphs that are effective all across the state, starting early in the summer and going through the fall.

Season opener

The greatest problem confronting the smallmouth angler early in the season is the volume of water our streams carry. However, two areas are especially productive at this time. The slow water along the banks to the sides of the main currents and the protected pockets immediately downstream of large boulders both offer the bass safe havens from the swift currents.

The upstream dead-drifting nymph tactic is by far my favorite method to use when the rivers are full. I like to cast the nymph

Smallmouth Nymphing

either straight or up and across-stream at a narrow angle, allow it to sink to the bottom, and then retrieve the line slowly but tightly as the current pushes the fly downstream. This technique lets the nymph wiggle along the stream bottom at the bass's level, in a very realistic manner.

As you can imagine, it can be difficult to detect the bass's strike when fishing upstream. One cannot rely on feeling these strikes because the bass usually know it is a phony as soon as they take it and they eject it quickly. However, with the proper "strike detection system" you can see the strike in time to set the hook. I use a nine-foot leader tapered to a 2X in which five feet of bright fluorescent-red mono is used for butt sections. Onto this I install three indicators spaced evenly along the leader, starting about four feet above the nymph. When dead-drift nymph fishing, I watch the closest indicator to the fly I can see, but if all three are too deep to see, I watch the fluorescent butt of the leader. At the slightest hint of a take, I strike forcefully with both the rod and the line hand.



Patterns top left clockwise: Hellgrammite, Bitch Creek Nymph, Brooks' Dark Stonefly, Casual Dress.

If the protected water behind midstream boulders is too deep to approach from below, thus preventing me from using the upstream dead-drift method, I use my "swinging nymph" technique. Here I position myself so the productive water is about 15 feet straight out behind me. Cast a nymph, such as a Bitch Creek or a Dark Stonefly in size 4 or 6, about 10 feet upstream of the feeding area. One must use some restraint to prevent picking up the slack line too soon, for it is important to allow the nymph to sink about five to 10 seconds to reach the bottom in deep pockets.

When my nymph is on the bottom, I lift my rod arm up and out about 45 degrees over the stream while picking up any excessive slack line with my line hand. As the nymph bounces along the bottom, the rod swings in a smooth arc, ensuring a tight line all the way down to the fly so that the strike can be felt. I now rely greatly on my indicators to let me see if I really have my nymph down where I want it. For example, if the water is five feet deep and I can clearly see my bottom indicator, which is located four feet above the fly, I know I've picked up the slack line too soon and the nymph is not running along the stream bottom.

Although I am trying to run my nymphs naturally along the bottom with both of these first two techniques, the mechanics are entirely different. In dead-drift nymphing I am wading upstream, casting up and across-stream, fishing the water beside me and detecting the strike by seeing it. In swing nymphing I am wading downstream, casting up and across-stream, fishing the water beside me and detecting the strike by feeling it. The choice between these two methods depends on the depth of the water.

Midsummer

By midsummer the river levels drop, reducing the force of the current, thus enabling you to fish the deeper mid-pool areas successfully. The large, robust dragonfly nymphs occur in great numbers in these areas, and because they are some of our largest nymphs, the bass are greatly attracted to them.

The natural manner of movement of the true dragonfly nymphs is your cue for the way to fish your flies. The nymphs are actually very good swimmers, propelling themselves through the stream in a series of short jet-like bursts. Realizing this, I like to cast my nymph down and across-stream and retrieve it with short, firm strips of the line hand. By slowly fishing my way down through the pools and methodically covering all prospective holding water with this technique, I can usually take several nice bass from each pool.

I use this method well into the tails of the pools if the water there has a fair number of pockets three feet deep or more. If, however, the tail is shallower than that, I get my best results by coming from below and fishing my way upstream.

For example, recently I located a number of large bass feeding in the shallows to the side of the river above the pool tail. I carefully waded up to a spot just where the water spilled from above the pool to splash over the beginning riffle at my feet. The slightly faster current where I stood helped mask my approach and halted any potential fish-scaring waves from radiating up into the flat water above. Because the current would be pushing my fly downstream, I wanted a pattern in which the action would be enhanced by the flow. I selected a strymph in size 4 because the ostrich herl and soft rabbit fur produced a very enticing undulating action under these conditions. By carefully covering the closest water first, then gradually lengthening my cast to reach other bass, I landed seven quite large bass out of this tennis-court-size pool tail. And, almost embarrassingly, this all took place within clear view of two local anglers who were getting skunked while fishing live minnows from an anchored boat about 200 yards upstream in the deep middle part of the pool.

Was my strymph the only thing the bass in that pool wanted to eat? Of course not. I was successful because they had dropped back in the tail to feed and my strymph successfully mimicked the appearance and the action of the natural dragonflies there.

photo-Harry W. Murray

My most effective fly action here is a slow line-hand stripping retrieve where the strymph is moved just slightly faster than the current.

From July well into fall, smallmouths feed heavily on damselfly nymphs that live in and around the aquatic grassbeds. Although these nymphs are slim and delicate, erroneously leading some anglers to assume that they lack appeal to the larger bass, the fish are pulled, almost in a magnetized manner, to the grassbeds by the great concentrations of the nymphs. On many occasions I have landed bass that were so stuffed with these little morsels that I wondered why they took my fly.

Like the dragonfly nymph, the damselfly nymph is a very good swimmer, spurting through the water in an almost teasing manner. This is how I like to manipulate my imitations. Where the aquatic grassbeds are growing along the banks, I like to wade downstream parallel to them and cast a size 10 damselfly nymph right in beside the grass. Because the bass often hold within inches of the grass, the strike frequently occurs almost instantly. This means one must quickly get the line under control to set the hook. If no strike comes within a few seconds, I strip the nymph out in slow six-inch darts for about 10 feet and then pick it up and recast it about a foot farther downstream and repeat the sequence.

The receding waters now reveal a wealth of feeding areas in the heads of the pools that previously had been practically obliterated by the full rivers. These are the gentle riffle tongues that pierce down into the main pools. Flowing into various depths over many different bottom compositions, these riffles are the home of great insect populations. However, because bass prefer to feed on something providing an easy mouthful, focus your attention on the largest insects, the stoneflies and the previously mentioned hellgrammites.

These two natural insects (I know, technically, the hellgrammite is a larva) both live in much the same kind of habitat in and below these riffles, so one can choose either a pattern such as a Dark Stonefly Nymph or a Hellgrammite. Regardless, the angling technique is the same. That is, drift them naturally along the stream bottom.

If the force of the current is only moderate, the easiest tactic is to start right in the riffle and wade downstream, methodically casting down and across the stream to each pocket and hole. The retrieve here is almost nonexistent. Instead, one uses the fly rod almost as a sweeping guide to bounce the nymph into one hotspot after another as the current pushes it downstream. Easy does it. Too much lifting and manipulating the fly may pull it so far off the bottom that the bass may not take it.

If I perceive the current to be so strong that my nymphs may not work along the bottom, or if I've already tried this run down and across and did not catch fish, or at least bump the bottom on a few drifts, I revert to my upstream dead-drifting technique used earlier in the season. Now, however, the reduced currents simplify both the control of the drift and the detection of the strike. By keeping my casts to 30 feet or less and carefully watching my indicators as I work my way upstream, I normally take many nice bass here.

During periods of low water, large bass become exceedingly wary and you scare many of them with the approach. Obviously, this is a greater concern in flat, shallow water. The riffles here in the heads of the pools have saved me more than once under these circumstances. Not only does the broken surface give bass an apparent sense of security, encouraging them to feed more aggressively, but I use it to help hide my approach to flat water in which I may otherwise scare the fish. For example, late in the summer many large bass are attracted to eddy-riffle interfaces on the bank sides of the streams immediately below the riffles. The slow current of the eddy provides easy holding water for the bass, while the riffle offers him much needed oxygen and serves to deliver food to him. I like to approach these feeding stations from the river side by wading through the broken water of the riffles and make my casts into the slow-water pocket just inches inside the eddy. The swirling current imparts adequate action to the nymph so that all I have to do is be ready for the strike within the first several seconds.

Fall

As the water temperature drops in the fall, the bass undertake a mini-migration into the deeper pools and runs.

One beautiful late October afternoon fate brought me some outstanding action in one such deep pool. I wasn't familiar with the water, so I opted to fish my way upstream from the tail of the pool so I wouldn't scare the bass in the clear water. Fishing a size 6 weighted Casual Dress Nymph up and across-stream, I took a few small bass in water three feet deep. However, I was soon halted by water too deep to wade. I could either retrace my steps back downstream and go elsewhere or I could stay in that spot and systematically cover as much of the deep pool upstream as possible by gradually lengthening my casts. I decided on the latter ploy, figuring that if that failed to produce, I could always go elsewhere later. By slowly crawling the Casual Dress Nymph along the stream bottom, I took one nice fish after another.

That evening as I mulled over this unexpected success, I realized there were actually two reasons these bass had been so cooperative. First, the deep water had provided the bass the comfort they sought in the chilling waters. But more importantly, because I was stuck in one spot, they had become acclimated to my presence and I was not spooking them as I may have if I were moving about.

My favorite type of water for fishing nymphs late in the fall is the deep cuts between the ledges running across the rivers. These basketball court-size fish ponds are frequently boxed in on the upper and lower reaches by the ledges and on the ends by the flowing river. I like to stand just in the lower ledge, and by casting up or up and across-stream, cover all of this protected water with nymphs such as the Red Squirrel or a Black Strymph. If the current is very slow I use a bounce retrieve, where I slowly lift the rod tip about a foot every several feet in the drift, and then drop it back to allow the nymph to sink back to the bottom. If, however, there is a moderate current, I use a very slow 3-inch line-hand stripping retrieve that causes the nymph to dart slowly along the bottom.

Most smallmouth nymph anglers prefer rods about nine feet long that balance with size 8 weight-forward lines. This length facilitates good drift control and the strength aids in casting the heavy nymphs. A durable single-action reel and nine-foot leaders tapered to 1X, 2X and 3X round out the tackle.

As you can see, artificial nymphs can be fished with great success for bass throughout Pennsylvania. By carefully evaluating each piece of water you plan to fish, selecting nymph patterns that match those on which the bass are accustomed to feeding, and handling them naturally in the water, I'm sure you will be very well-pleased with your success.

Southeast Pennsylvania WALLEYES

by John W. McGonigle

Walleyes, those tasty, toothsome creatures of the depths, are targeted by more anglers than ever before. In fact, *Pennsylvania Angler* reader surveys over the years show that walleyes trail only trout and largemouth and smallmouth bass in popularity among Pennsylvania anglers.

Even though some of our best walleye hotspots are located on the opposite end of the state, the Southeast region has a lot to offer anglers looking to land what many consider to be the tastiest freshwater fish.

A long conversation with Commission Area Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann has helped greatly in narrowing down the walleye search in southeastern Pennsylvania. After working and fishing for more than 10 years in the region, no one knows its waters and fishes better than Kaufmann.



photo-Wally Eberhart

Kaufmann suggests three classifications of walleye waters: one with abundant numbers of fish, a second with moderate numbers but larger fish, and a third category that, though they have low numbers of fish, have good concentrations of walleyes at certain spots or certain times of the year.

In the first category is Chester County's Struble Lake. The lake is small, only 146 acres, so it often has windy conditions, and only electric motors are allowed. Still, fishing pressure is minimal. The lake appeals primarily to local anglers who can expect to catch walleyes between 16 and 20 inches, with some ranging up to 24 inches.

Some sections of the Susquehanna River fall in to the first category. The Falmouth section in Lancaster County is a prime example. For those preferring free-flowing river sections, the area from the tailwater of the York Haven Dam down nearly to Route 30 offers productive walleye action. For those who like a more lake-like fishery, try the pool on the Susquehanna from the Safe Harbor Dam up nearly to Route 30. If you like tailwater fishing, the areas below Safe Harbor and Holtwood dams may be to your liking.

In the same area, Lake Marburg in Codorus State Park, near Hanover (York County), also has ample numbers of walleyes. Because of heavy fishing pressure, there are few large fish, with the average walleye creeled running between 15 and 18 inches.

Concerning his second category of walleye water, Kaufmann says, "These waters tend to frustrate anglers. You must really know your stuff to catch fish in these waters." These waterways harbor moderate numbers of walleyes but are home to some large fish–more large fish than are available in the first category of waters.

A pair of lakes falling into category number two are 290-acre Lake Redman and 220-acre Lake Williams, located in Jacobus, just outside of York. Both lakes are regulated specially for walleyes with a 20-inch size limit. "Though typical walleyes run 15 to 20 inches, there are plenty of legal-size fish," Kaufmann says. Kaufmann notes that the largest walleye ever caught by the Commission while surveying came from Lake Williams. It weighed 11 1/2 pounds and measured 31 inches.

"The biggest walleyes in southeastern Pennsylvania are in Bucks County's Lake Nockamixon," says Kaufmann. This waterways is located in the state park of the same name. Kaufmann puts walleye numbers here at moderate to high, with typical walleyes going between 18 and 23 inches and some large fish going 27 to 29 inches. According to Kaufmann, Nockamixon is definitely a place where anglers must really know the water to succeed. "In addition to the lake," says Kaufmann, "the tailrace fishery is also pretty good at Nockamixon."

Lake Luxemburg is in Core Creek County Park between Langhorn and Newtown, Bucks County. It also falls in to Kaufmann's category number two. With average fish running 18 to 20 inches, it offers anglers a respectable return on their fishing investment, especially if you land one of the rare 25-inchers there.

Staying with category two is Blue Marsh Lake in Berks County, just northwest of Reading. Walleyes there are very tough to catch, and they average 18 to 22 inches. Many successful local anglers fish primarily at night on this 1,150-acre impoundment to avoid the heavy daytime fishing and boating pressure. Kaufmann reminds anglers to "fish the tailrace of Blue Marsh–it's a pretty good bet for walleyes."

Kaufmann's category three waterways include lower numbers of walleyes but with decent concentrations where and when conditions are right. The first in this category is the Schuylkill River near Reading. Kaufmann cautions that although walleye numbers are low, some fish concentrate in the pool and tailrace at Felix Dam and at the mouth of Tulpehocken Creek. You can catch walleyes to 24 inches in these river sections.

Ontelaunee Reservoir in Berks County is 1,080 acres but offers fishing only from shore. According to Kaufmann, the reservoir is no longer stocked with walleyes, but walleye concentrations are good during spring spawning. Kaufmann suggests fishing the upper third of the reservoir, from the mouth of St. Peter's Creek Cove to the cement plant. Access is on Lakeside Drive. Fish can be found in 6 to 8 feet of water with sizes ranging from sub-legal to 23 inches.

The Delaware River is one of the best fisheries in the East. Its gamefish include bass, shad, walleyes, muskies and stripers, as well as panfish and other species anglers like to catch. Even though it seems that walleye numbers are declining, there are specific areas that harbor respectable, catchable numbers. Fish range from sub-legal size to 30 inches, with average angler catches running 18 to 27 inches.

Beginning at Easton and moving downriver, the Delaware's juncture with the Lehigh River has decent walleye concentrations. The area where Interstate Route 78 crosses the river is also walleye territory, though access to the river is very tough. As an aside, Kaufmann said, "The smallmouth bass fishing here is really excellent." The mouth of the Tohickon Creek is popular, "especially in winter," says Kaufmann. Another walleye spot with access problems is the New Hope Wing Dam, long a popular spot with anglers. Scudder's Falls near Yardley, just above the I-95 bridge, is another concentration spot for walleyes. A walleye spot referred to as the "Fall Line" represents the separation point between tidal and non-tidal waters. It's located between Trenton and Morrisville.

Many of these Delaware River spots produce best in January, February and early March. Some produce all year.

Though most of the area's walleye waters require stocking, Lake Marburg and the Susquehanna River do well by way of natural reproduction. Southeastern Pennsylvania lakes that have limited natural reproduction plus stocking include lakes Galena and Nockamixon in Bucks County and Struble Lake in Chester County.

Fishing techniques for walleyes vary. Trolling and casting produce well for their respective advocates in the proper conditions.

Trolling nightcrawlers behind an Erie Dearie-like spinner is one of the most effective methods of catching walleyes. Kaufmann says, "Be sure to troll slowly for the best results."

Lures for trolling include the Wally Diver, Rebels, Rapalas and Ripplin Redfin.

Bucktail jigs and Mr. Twister jigs are effective for walleyes, especially in rivers. Even though jigs can be fished with or without a minnow, some of the largest walleyes fall prey to minnows.

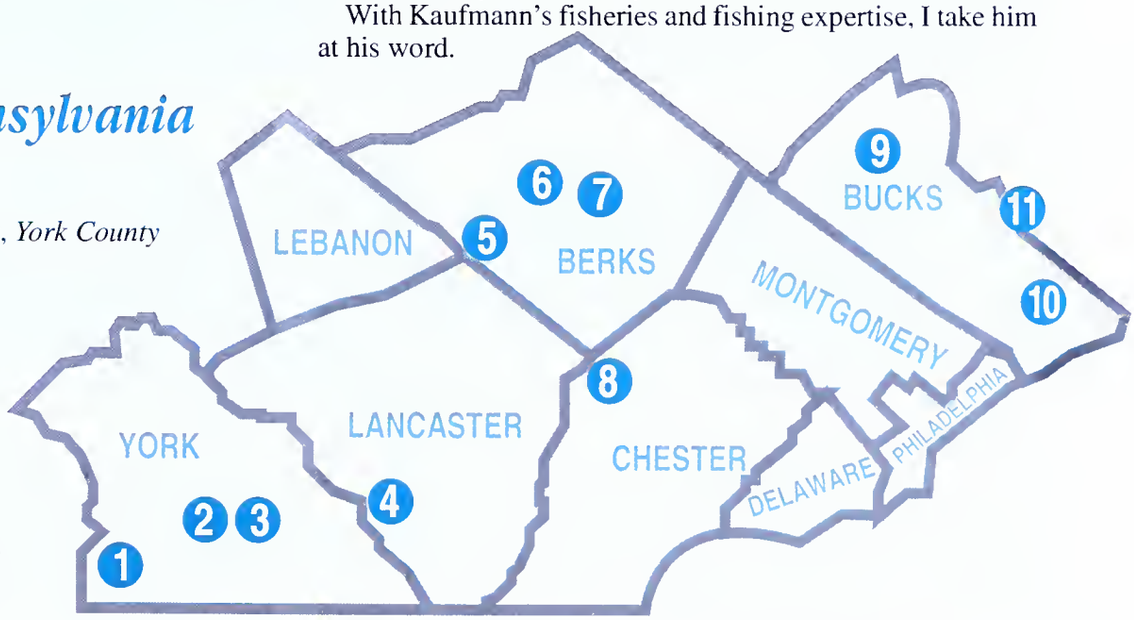
Because walleyes are notorious for light strikes, a light-action graphite spinning rod of 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 feet serves the walleye angler well. A well-matched spinning reel spooled with 6-pound premium line rounds out the tackle needs, though there is room for individual tackle preferences.

Concerning walleye fishing in Pennsylvania, Mike Kaufmann, fisherman, suggests earnestly, "In Pennsylvania, with a few exceptions like Lake Erie, Pymatuning Lake, French Creek and the Allegheny River, you can do as well for walleyes in southeastern Pennsylvania as anywhere in the state."

With Kaufmann's fisheries and fishing expertise, I take him at his word.

11 Southeast Pennsylvania Walleye Hotspots

1. Lake Marburg, Codorus State Park, *York County*
2. Lake Williams, *York County*
3. Lake Redman, *York County*
4. Susquehanna River
5. Blue Marsh Lake, *Berks County*
6. Schuylkill River, *near Reading*
7. Lake Ontelaunee, *Berks County*
8. Struble Lake, *Chester County*
9. Lake Nockamixon, Nockamixon State Park, *Bucks County*
10. Lake Luxembourg, *Bucks County*
11. Delaware River



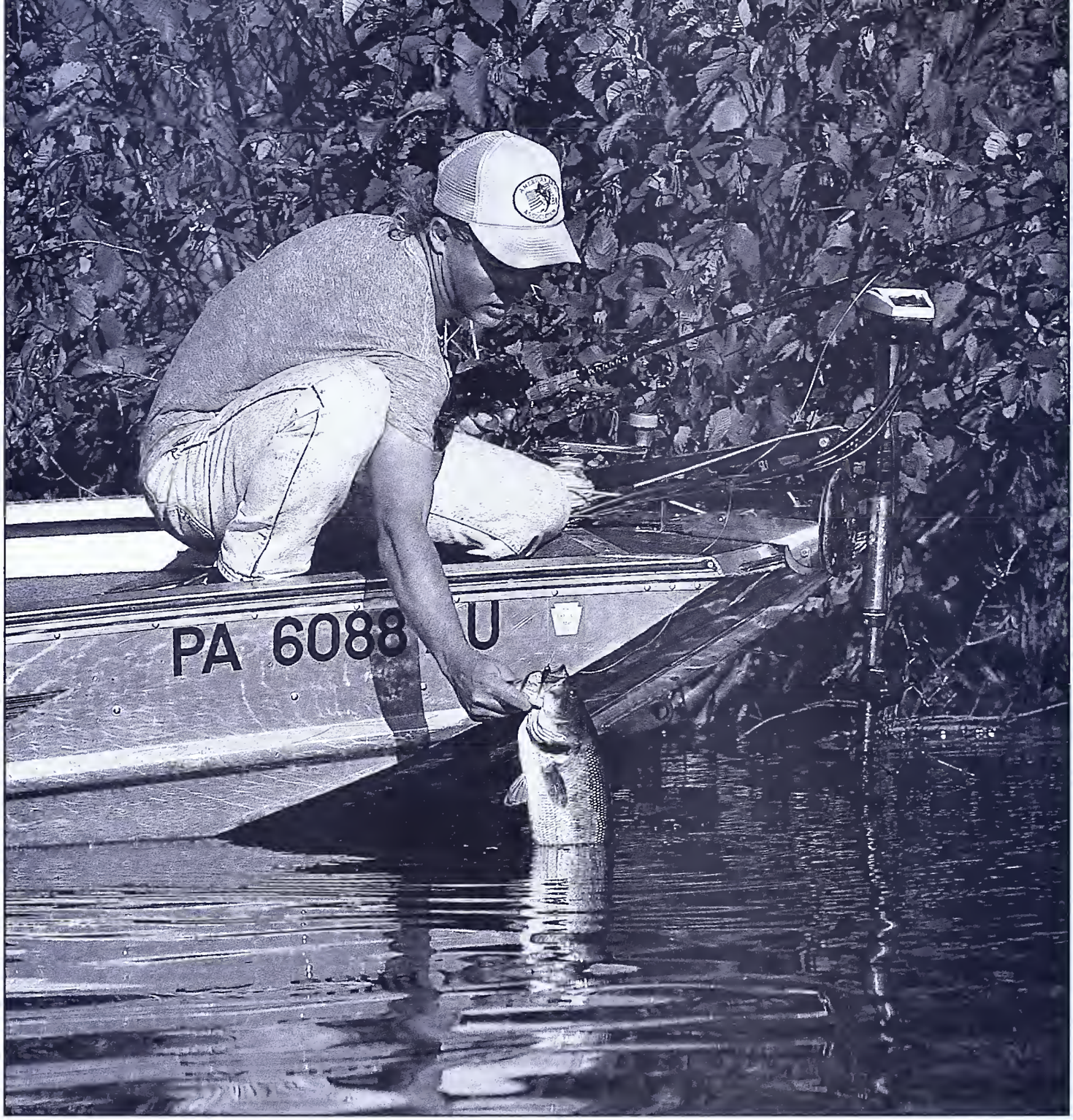


photo-Darl Black

Bass Fishing

on Northwest Natural Lakes

by Darl Black

All natural! Pure! Nothing artificial! That is how an ad agency might pitch inland natural lakes in northwest Pennsylvania. Alas, the sales pitch would not be completely accurate. True, these lakes were created by the forces of nature. Their origin can be traced back 70,000 years when ice sheets forged the landscape. However, we have altered nature's lakes. Dikes or small dams have been constructed on several to raise lake levels.

Still, these lakes are more alike than different. They have aged at about the same rate. On a time line, they fall into the eutrophic category. This translates into limited hard-bottom areas, usually indistinct breaklines, and a lot of sediment buildup in deeper basins. They have abundant weed growth in the shallows and usually form a thermocline in summer with very low levels of dissolved oxygen in deep water.

The aquatic environment is best suited to warmwater species. The largemouth bass is currently nature's handpicked topline predator in these waters.

Bass in some lakes have slightly different distinctive markings, perhaps the result of water tint. Genetically they are all northern largemouth, but the fish differ in intensity of pigmentation. Some anglers familiar with all these waters can look at a picture of a largemouth and tell you which lake it came from.

Because most property surrounding these lakes is private, fishing must be done from boats. However, all eight lakes have access sites open to the public.

Conneaut Lake

At 928 acres, Conneaut is Pennsylvania's largest natural lake. From a structure viewpoint, it is also the most complex. The lake has multiple basins separated by submerged humps and ridges. The deepest water is 72 feet. Other basins range from 25 to 60 feet. In addition to shoreline vegetation extending to depths of 12 feet, many mid-lake humps are covered with weed growth. Milfoil, coontail, eel grass and cabbage are the primary aquatic plants. There are areas of sand and gravel in the shallow water, as well as rocky outcroppings in deeper water.

In the 1800s, a dike raised the lake several feet, inundating a few shoreline stumps. Shallow manmade canals penetrate the shoreline in several areas.

Conneaut has unlimited horsepower and is a very popular resort lake. Anglers attempting to fish on summer weekends are confronted with intense boat traffic.

The Commission access on the north corner of the lake off Route 618 has an excellent ramp and parking area. The borough of Conneaut Lake maintains a ramp at Fireman's Beach on the southwest shore.

Based on recent electrofishing, Commission Area Fisheries Manager Ron Lee reports the largemouth population appears to have taken a dip between 1988 and 1991. In 1988 he shocked 11 bass per hour, with five fish over 12 inches and 2.5 fish over 15 inches. In 1991 those hourly figures dropped to three bass over 12 inches and none over 15 inches. During the 1991 late-spring survey, he was unable to find good shallow-water weeds, and points to lack of vegetation as the reason for a poorer bass showing.

Conneaut strategy

"Ten years ago Conneaut was one of the best bass lakes in the state," says Bob Hornstrom, a 17-year lake veteran. "But today, bass catching has fallen off to only average. You still have an opportunity to catch several 2-pound to 5-pound fish on a good day, but consistent big-fish catches every outing simply are not made anymore." During the summer, Hornstrom uses the "dipping" technique.

"I use a heavy-action 7 1/2-foot flipping stick, 20-pound line, and a 6-inch Texas-rigged worm," Hornstrom says. "I dip, or flip, the worm into pockets and turns while maneuvering the boat along the outside edge of the weedbeds. It's more difficult today because the water is getting clear and the weeds grow deeper. If the weeds extend any deeper, I'll resort to casting the worm.

Edinboro Lake

Located at the town of Edinboro is 240-acre Edinboro Lake. A small dam on the outflow creek raised the level of the lake, submerging timber along the eastern shore, which eventually rotted, leaving a lot of stumps. Canals at the north end of the lake were dug as part of a failed housing development.

The maximum depth is 38 feet. The lake features long points and deep flats that make the bottom topography irregular, but not as complex as Conneaut Lake's bottom contour. Vegetation fills the shallows. It is particularly thick at the north end and in the bays on the east side.

Horsepower is unlimited. On busy summer weekends, all boat traffic moves counterclockwise to prevent accidents.

The borough of Edinboro maintains a public ramp on the west side. However, the access receives a poor rating because the concrete is uneven, and it is moss-covered and very slippery. Also, motors may strike rocks when loading during low-water periods, and trailer parking is very limited. A marina ramp, two blocks from the municipal ramp, charges a launch fee.

"Edinboro is a decent bass fishery," says Lee. "There are both largemouths and smallmouths, but largemouths dominate. In 1986 electrofishing, we caught 15 largemouths per hour with four over 15 inches."

Edinboro largemouths are exceptionally dark-green, appearing almost black. Many bass over 3 pounds exhibit a condition that anglers refer to as "funnel syndrome"–the mouth and head are large compared to the body of the fish. Normally this would indicate a poor forage base, but Lee sees no evidence of lack of forage in his surveys.

Edinboro strategy

"All patterns can be worked on Edinboro," says Dave Lefebre, one of the lake's most frequent bass anglers. "Depending on conditions, you can catch bass in milfoil, around docks, from root tentacles, and in lily pads. It's an angler's potpourri–whatever you like to do."

Lefebre likes to sling spinnerbaits around weedbeds. "If the water is muddy, chartreuse is best. If the water is clear–and it does get very clear at times–white or crystal skirts are better."

Nor would Lefebre fish the lake without a purple jig and pork on one rod. It's his magic Edinboro color. With it, he targets shallow stumps as well as boat docks. At times, quality bass come from the spatterdock beds in the canal region of the lake. For this a slop bait like a Rat, Frog or Johnson Spoon is the ticket.

Canadohta Lake

Even though 160-acre Canadohta Lake is a popular resort site, outboards are restricted to 10 horsepower. Nonetheless, the lake experiences heavy traffic on weekends from over 200 pontoon boats docked along the shore. The lake has a small dam on the outflow and a canal at the north end. The Com-

mission has the only public access on Canadohta. Located on the west side, the ramp is adequate for small boats. Parking is limited. This peanut-shaped lake has a gradual slope from the shallows to deep water. The maximum depth is 30 feet. Weeds grow to about 8 feet. However, heavy herbicide treatment in early summer results in skimpy cover.

Based on electrofishing surveys, Lee says that this lake has a very poor largemouth population. In a 1991 survey, only eight largemouths per hour were taken, with three over 12 inches and none over 15 inches. "I'm not sure what the problem is, but I'll be taking a closer look at herbicide treatment," says Lee. A certain percentage of weed growth is needed to serve as nursery areas for young gamefish and baitfish.

Canadohta strategy

"Although not known for outstanding fishing, there are bass here to be caught," says Sam Hossler, a lakeside resident. "To be consistent on Canadohta, fish after dark." Hossler positions his boat on the deep edge of a weedbed and casts a topwater lure toward shore. "I have my best success after 10 p.m. Any kind of noisy topwater will work, but I am particular to a black Jitterbug.

Experiment with the retrieve. Sometimes a stop-and-go routine works. Other times they only want a steady *putt-putt-putt*."

On a good night, Hossler expects 10 to 12 strikes in a 2- to 3-hour period. The bass may run from 1 1/2 to 4 pounds.

Hossler says there are no ledges, dropoffs or structural elements beyond the weedbeds. "All you have is a bowl-shaped lake ringed with vegetation. Bass are in the weeds or under docks."

Hossler recommends that daytime anglers come armed with quarter-ounce spinnerbaits or small soft stickbaits like the Knob Tail Shiner, and think very shallow.

Sandy Lake

Sandy Lake, located at Stoneboro, is unique. The 150-acre lake is deeded to the Lakeside Park Company, which establishes regulations regarding boats. The lake is primarily maintained for water skiing. There are no restrictions on horsepower, but among the boats not permitted are inboard/outboards, jet boats and racing boats.

A launch fee is charged, and anglers are permitted to launch any time. The ramp is narrow with a sharp incline. Vehicles with low hitches will certainly encounter problems. Sand buildup on the ramp is a concern, too.

The bottom contour is almost bowl-shaped, although some shoreline areas drop quickly to 20 feet. The deepest spot is reportedly 55 feet. The east end near the outflow offers the most cover, including logs, stumps and plenty of pad beds. Coontail beds, scattered around the lake, are not uniformly distributed.

Commission biologists do not survey this lake because the access is not in public ownership. However, all state fishing regulations apply, including seasons and size limits. Sandy Lake largemouths are some of the most beautiful bass anywhere. They are plump with a higher-than-normal weight-to-length average.

Sandy strategy

"I've made hundreds of passes over the lake with a depthfinder, but I can't find anything outstanding as far as bottom structure," says Jerry Swidzinski, an experienced bass angler who fishes Sandy. "This is 100 percent weedbed fishing. The outside weed edges are best. The weedbeds fade out at 10 or 12 feet, although scattered clumps continue to 15 feet. That is as deep as I have caught bass on the lake."

Swidzinski points to the jig-and-pig as his most successful offering, saying "the bigger the pig, the better." Texas-rigged worms are his second pick.

"You can enjoy exciting action on top, too. Some of my best days have been when it's so rough I could not control the boat with the electric motor, so I anchored and cast a topwater over the weeds. Bass still came up to smack the lure."

Sugar Lake

Ninety-acre Sugar Lake is a true bowl, tapering gradually to a depth of 16 feet. Stained water prevents uniform weed growth. Sparse milfoil beds grow to a depth of five feet. The northern and southern shores feature abundant spatterdock pads in front of a marshy shoreline.

An unusual state-enforced 6-horsepower restriction remains in affect on Sugar–an attempt by lakeside homeowners to limit use of the lake by outsiders.

The Commission access on the west side of the lake may be the worst ramp in the state. The gravel washes out in heavy rains and is continually rutted from vehicles getting stuck. Only four-wheel-drive vehicles should attempt to use the access. Also, parking is limited to about six vehicles with trailers.

Given all the negatives regarding access, the lake is still worth a visit. "It is an outstanding bass fishery," says Lee. "The lake is under Conservation Regulations with a 15-inch minimum size and a 2-bass limit. When the lake went to these special regulations in 1985, we were averaging 21 bass per hour of electrofishing, with four over 15 inches. Then in 1989, after the regulations had a chance to kick in, we jumped to 55 bass per hour with 17 bass over 15 inches. It has dropped slightly during the last survey, but it remains the best bass fishery in my district."

Sugar strategy

"Only one pattern works for me on Sugar," says Dave Lehman, a bass fanatic who fishes the lake regularly. "Fish as far back into the pads as possible. I want my lure as close to the submerged marsh brush as I can get. On Sugar, I have never caught a bass in the milfoil, on the outside weed edge, or in deep water."

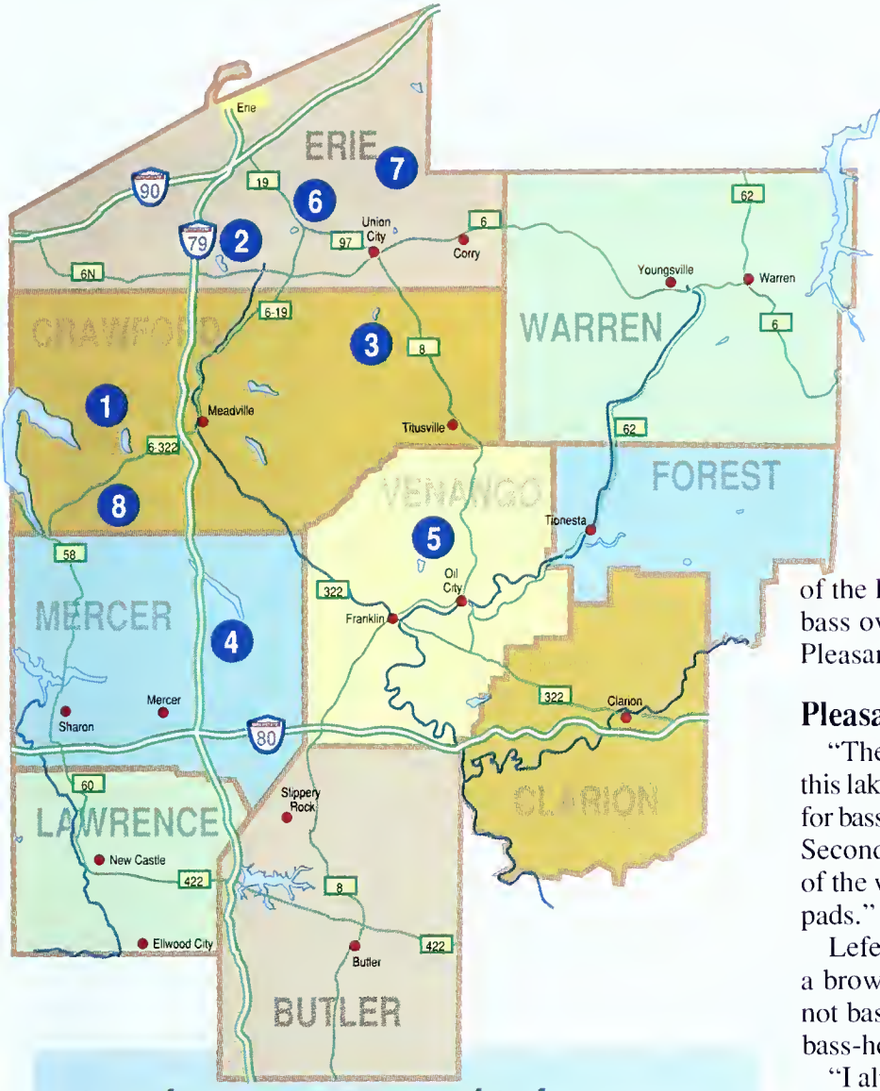
Fishing lures at Sugar is like weaving a bait through a jungle, requiring highly snag-resistant artificials. Lehman uses a Texas-rigged worm, spinnerbaits, Rats, Frogs and other weedless lures on heavy line.

"A typical day is six to 12 largemouths with an average fish going 13 to 14 inches. However, there are some really big fish in the lake," says Lehman, whose largest Sugar bass was an 8.2-pound monster. "It's not easy access or easy fishing, but the rewards can be very satisfying."

Lake Leboeuf

LeBoeuf Lake, near historic Waterford, is 70 acres of clear tea-stained water. There are no water level control devices.

LeBoeuf's shores are marshy and brush-lined. Spatterdock pads, milfoil and coontail grow along the perimeter, as well as ringing the single island. A few submerged bars and steep dropoffs also characterize LeBoeuf. The deepest water is 22 feet. LeBoeuf, too, has an unusual regulation–no horsepower limitation, but the entire lake is "no wake."



Northwest PA Natural Lakes

1. Conneaut Lake, 928 acres, unlimited horsepower.
2. Edinboro Lake, 240 acres, unlimited horsepower.
3. Canadohta Lake, 160 acres, 10 horsepower limit.
4. Sandy Lake, 150 acres, unlimited horsepower.
5. Sugar Lake, 90 acres, 6 horsepower limit.
6. Lake LeBoeuf, 70 acres, unlimited horsepower, no wake.
7. Pleasant Lake, 60 acres, no motors.
8. Crystal Lake, 60 acres, no motors.

A recently completed Commission access provides a concrete ramp and ample parking along inflowing LeBoeuf Creek. However, take care launching during low-water periods. Ron Lee rates LeBoeuf as a "very good bass fishery" based on his 1992 survey. Electrofishing produced over 40 bass per hour with 5.5 over 15 inches. Distinctive markings on LeBoeuf bass rival those from Sandy Lake for the most beautiful largemouths in the state.

LeBoeuf strategy

"It's almost impossible to catch bass consistently day after day on LeBoeuf," says Lee Duer, one of only a handful of LeBoeuf bass anglers. "The fish are either on or not on–there is no in-between. I'll have a 25-bass day, then go back to the lake under the same conditions and get nothing. I've caught bass in 12 feet of water along the weedline in the morning, returned later and found that the bass had moved real shallow back in the thick stuff. It's a tough lake to figure out."

Duer's favorite approach is to wing a quarter-ounce white spinnerbait at every piece of visible cover–particularly pads and stickups. The most productive days occur when the lake is high with runoff, thereby flooding shoreline brush. One must be an accurate caster to catch bass on LeBoeuf.

Lake Pleasant

A stocked trout lake loaded with big bass–that's 60-acre Pleasant Lake near Wattsburg.

This is another bowl with bogs at two ends and a maximum depth of 18 feet. The weedy shoreline drops off quickly. A "no motor" regulation excludes electric motors, too. To fish here you need to row or paddle.

The Commission leases land along Lake Pleasant Road for public access to the water, but there is no ramp. The parking area is on the opposite side of the road from the lake.

"The status of this bass fishery is excellent," says biologist Lee. "The most recent electrofishing yielded 40 bass per hour with 12 bass over 15 inches. That is extremely high when you consider that 50 percent of the lakes and reservoirs in my district yield fewer than one bass over 15 inches per hour. Only Sugar ranks higher than Pleasant."

Pleasant strategy

"There are two, maybe three, patterns that I can count on in this lake," says Dave Lefebre, one of the few who fishes Pleasant for bass. "The best is a quarter-ounce buzzbait over the weedbeds. Second is a 4-inch worm in 8 feet of water on the outside edge of the weeds. Finally, I've had some success with a Rat in the pads."

Lefebre says the water is usually clear, although it does have a brown stain at times. Fishing pressure is directed at trout, not bass. According to Lefebre, the best approach to shallow bass-holding vegetation is using a float tube.

"I almost hate to divulge this," whispers Lefebre, "but there is one more lure you should have for Lake Pleasant–a trout-colored Slug-Go soft stickbait!"

Crystal Lake

Years ago, 60-acre Crystal Lake at Hartstown was called "Mud Lake," apparently because of the very soft bottom and marshy land surrounding the lake. Today it's part of Gamelands 214.

The bottom contour is similar to Lake Pleasant–weedy fringe with a gradual depth increase to 18 feet. The shallow cover is comprised of spatterdock pads, milfoil and some submerged stickups along the shore. As a Game Commission-owned lake, no motors of any kind are permitted. There is a parking area at the end of a narrow lane. Car-top boats or canoes must be carried 25 yards to the water. Commission biologists have not surveyed Crystal Lake for years.

Crystal strategy

In recent years, I have not encountered anyone who fishes for bass on Crystal. During the late 1970s, I frequently fished the lake. Although favorably impressed with the average size of the bass caught, I never managed more than two or three bass per trip. I recall there were golden shiners in the lake–an excellent native forage for bass–and warmouth sunfish. Receiving little fishing pressure, Crystal Lake is a potential sleeper for really big bass.

Back then, spinnerbaits caught most of the fish. Today I would attack Crystal with pad baits like Rats and Frogs, too. Perhaps the new soft stickbaits would draw strikes from the lake's lunkers. Matter of fact, just thinking about it has stirred my interest. I'll be planning a return trip to Crystal this summer.

Cantankerous Catfish

by Mike Bleech



photo-Mike Bleech

Though they fall into the panfish category in the Pennsylvania fishing regulations, big cats, channel catfish and flathead catfish, are a far cry from the bullhead members of their family that really are panfish. For starters, they grow a whole lot bigger. It is quite possible to catch either of the big cats weighing more than 20 pounds. Try fitting that into your frying pan!

The world record channel cat, according to the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame, is 58 pounds. According to that same organization, the world record flathead cat is 91 pounds, 4 ounces. Our state records are 35 pounds, 2 1/2 ounces for the channel cat, and 43 pounds, 9 ounces for the flathead. For most serious Pennsylvania catfish anglers, catching the first 50-pounder is a quest.

Don't expect to find the big cats in the same soft-bottom ponds or backwaters where you might catch bullheads. Channel cats and flatheads live in river channels, where the bottom is hard. They rest and feed right under the stiffest current in the deeper pools. Actually, they stay out of the current for the most part. Their shapes help them stay close to the bottom, where the current is broken.

For the most part, the best time to fish for the big cats is during summer nights. Channel cats are sometimes caught during daytime, but then usually either in cloudy water, or during overcast days. Long, calm, humid spells are usually good. The dog days of summer might better be called cat(fish) days.

Flatheads and channel cats are similar in many ways. Their niches overlap. It is not unusual to catch one while fishing for the other. But they are different enough to consider them separately.

Channel catfish

Channel catfish are the most popular of the big catfish here and in most of the country. Buy catfish at a restaurant or market and it is probably farm-raised. In Pennsylvania their original range was the Ohio River and Lake Erie drainages, but that range has been expanded to most of the state through stocking, both intentional and unintentional. The current state record was caught from the Lehigh Canal, far from the native range.

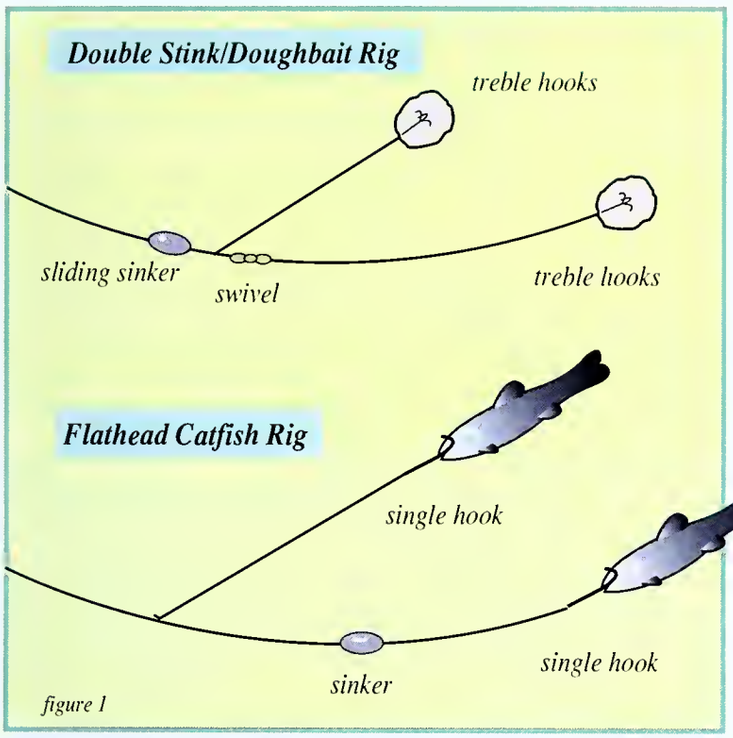


figure 1

Channel cats are regarded as the sportiest catfishes because they frequently strike artificial lures. They have developed a following of dry fly anglers along the Susquehanna River.

At Lake Arthur, they are regularly caught by ice anglers. We often caught them through Allegheny Reservoir ice during the late 1970s, when they were more abundant there. Sometimes they struck jigs. They caused a lot of excitement because they are so difficult to bring to the hole.

Most of the channel cats taken by anglers are smaller than 2 pounds. At this size they are generally steely gray with small black spots. As they grow larger they lose the spots. The adult color varies from brown to gray to bluish. At Lake Erie, anglers often misidentify the bluish phase as blue catfish, but biologists assure me that blue catfish do not inhabit Lake Erie, at least not in the numbers anglers think they are catching.

Channel cats are often caught in fairly swift current, such as where a riffle dumps into a deep pool. But they are adaptable. They also can be found in lakes. This adaptability is a key to their popularity, along with their cooperative nature and their eating quality.

One of the best situations is in the tailwaters of dams. A 30-pound channel cat was caught during September 1990 at the tailwaters of the Cowanesque Dam. The river below the tailwaters is barely deep enough to cover the back of such a huge fish, but the narrow tailwaters is deep and filled with smaller fish.

Anglers catch big channel cats in the Lake Erie surf. One of the favorite places is at the mouth of Elk Creek. The big catfish congregate where food accumulates. The best channel cat action I have had in Pennsylvania was in the Girard area. My brother-in-law, Al Aikens, and I caught about 50 channel cats between dusk and dawn. They ranged in size from 3 pounds to 12 pounds.

In Oswayo Creek, in the northeast corner of McKean County, big channel cats lurk under log jams. This is a good pattern at several deep, slow-moving creeks. Trees often settle into the deeper places, and high water tends to wash even deeper holes under the waterlogged trees.

Some other good places for channel cats are the Kinzua Dam tailwaters, below the navigation dams in the lower Allegheny River, Glendale Lake and French Creek. Few places in the state are far from some respectable channel catfishing.

Tackle

Tackle requirements for channel cats are minimal. Just about any rod and reel outfit can be used, unless you intend to specialize with very big channel cats. Small channel cats, 12 inches to 15 inches long, are fun on ultralight tackle. But if your goal is size, then I suggest a level-wind reel loaded with 20-pound line. And if you have to drag them away from a log jam, then something closer to 50-pound is a good idea. Channel cats are not line-shy, and they are powerful. At Lake Erie, they have torn 50 yards of line from my reel.

Even though I have caught channel cats on artificial lures, including topwater lures, serious fishing involves bait! Channel cats are carnivores and scavengers. Good baits include live or dead minnows, crayfish and nightcrawlers. Our most productive bait at Lake Erie has been shrimp. However, elsewhere shrimp have been a bust. Commercial baits are excellent. Chicken parts, though raved about as catfish bait, attract mostly soft-shelled turtles in my experience.

Rigging baits is easy. There is no need to use any specific rig. These are not fussy fish, which is one of the nicest things about them. The rigs I have suggested are just examples. One important point, though, is to use treble hooks with most of the commercial dough or stink baits. They generally stay on treble hooks much longer than on single hooks.

One of the tactics we use at Lake Erie is also noteworthy. We hang a bobber on the line between two rod guides. The clip-on bobber is set so that the line slips easily through it. The purpose of this bobber is to indicate strikes. The surf moves the rod tip so much that strikes are difficult to detect by watching the rod tip. The bobber pulls the line down in a "V" between the guides. A strike is indicated when the bobber starts to be pulled toward the rod.

Using a bobber as a strike indicator–
The bobber must be set so the line slides freely through it.

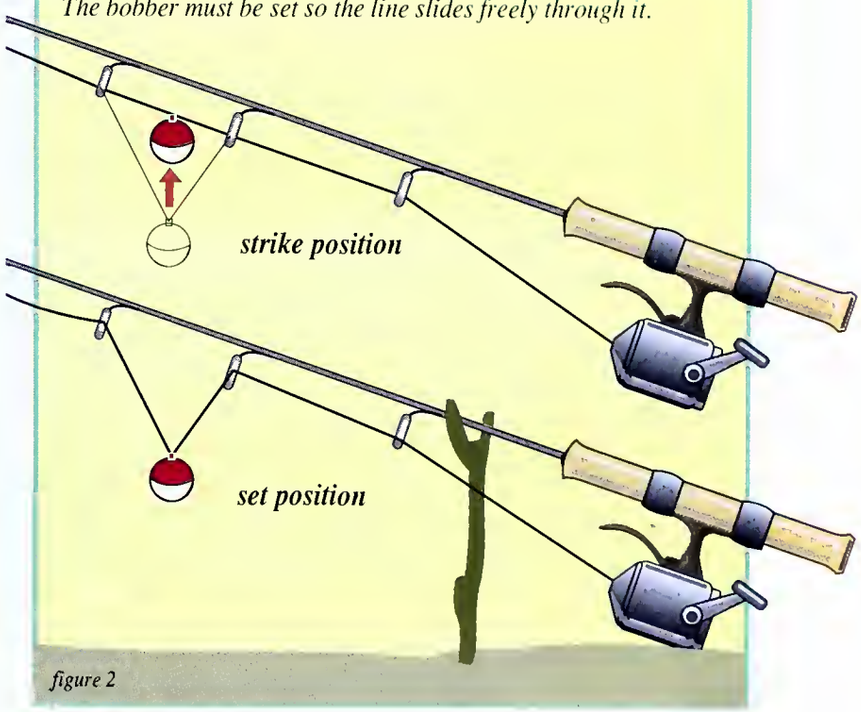


figure 2

Cantankerous Catfish



Flathead catfish

Flathead catfish are different. They are about as different as a fish can get. They look different. They behave differently. They are so different that they are seldom caught. There is nothing complicated about them–they are just different.

The easiest way to distinguish flatheads from channel cats is by their tails. The tail of a channel cat is deeply forked. A flathead tail is more rounded, and only slightly forked. As its name indicates, a flathead has a flat head, and the lower jaw protrudes. Generally brownish in color, the back and sides of flatheads are mottled with darker brown.

The goal for most serious flathead anglers–and there are not many of us–is to catch the biggest possible flathead. Even though many anglers catch channel cats because they are good to eat, flathead cats are mostly just for catching. They are not particularly good eating, but they are great catching.

The sight of my fishing pal Worth Hammond losing the first flathead he ever hooked is one of my more memorable fishing experiences. It says a lot about fishing for flatheads.

Worth brought his beefy musky trolling rod on our first flathead expedition to the Allegheny River, near Kennerdell. The reel was spooled with fresh 20-pound premium mono line. He had caught numerous muskies with that rig, and figured he could handle any catfish with it. When I asked him about his drag he scoffed and said, "I tighten it right down for muskies, and if it can handle muskies, it can handle any catfish we're going to find in this river."



Serious flathead fishing almost demands a boat. Flathead territory is inherently snaggy. Fishing downstream is the only practical way to do it in most places.

As it turned out, Worth hooked the first flathead of the night. The fish put quite a bend in the solid glass rod while he worked it close to the boat. He wore a pleased grin.

The catfish was close enough to boil the water alongside the boat, and Worth was saying something about it being a decent fighter, but then the big flathead decided it had seen enough and headed downriver.

Worth got a troubled look on his face. The rod bowed even more deeply as the tip was

photos-Mike Bleech

Allegheny River flatheads are carnivores. Forget about chicken guts, stink baits or anything else that is not alive and kicking. I have had somewhat better results by adding a couple drops of catfish scent to my baits.

pulled closer to the water. Tightening down the drag on that reel was fine for muskies. But 20-pound line is no match for a big flathead. When the line snapped it sounded like a firecracker.

Worth was more impressed than sorry about losing the fish.

Flatheads are native to the Ohio River drainage, but unlike channel cats they have not strayed far from there. Because they are not nearly as popular as channel cats, they are not often transplanted.

Why aren't these big, hard-fighting fish popular? Their nature makes them unlikely to be caught. They are rarely hooked by anyone who is not fishing specifically and correctly for them. Even when they are hooked, they are usually too much for the fishing tackle used. I grew up along the Allegheny River, the best flathead waterway in the state. I fished it for 40 years before I caught my first flathead.

Flatheads live in the main channel where the water is deep–the more water deeper than 15 feet, the better. They slide out of that deep water on occasions. During one outing when we got a late start, while we were motoring slowly up a riffle using a spotlight to pick our way through the shallows, we saw a flathead that was every bit of 25 pounds right in the riffle, in no more than 2 feet of water. But I suggest that you fish for flatheads in deep water.

Flatheads need cover. All the better pools within my experience are littered with boulders. This is evidenced by boulders along the shoreline. Apparently they retreat beneath the boulders when they are not prowling for food.

Flatheads detest light. I have heard about catching them elsewhere during daylight hours–and under different circumstances that I am describing here–but according to Jim Rogers, who has fished for flatheads for 60 years, fishing for them any time other than the darkest nights is a waste of time. The better flathead action is generally between the third-quarter and first-quarter moon phases, and then while the moon is not visible.

Keep artificial light to a bare minimum. If you need a light to rig, or for anything else, use a small flashlight, and keep the beam inside the boat. Do not burn a lantern while you are fishing. At one of my favorite flathead pools, lights burn all night in front of homes and camps. They are not bright on the water and the flatheads do not seem to mind them. But any light the flatheads are not accustomed to puts them off their bite.

Allegheny River flatheads are carnivores. Forget about chicken guts, stink baits or anything else that is not alive and kicking. I have had somewhat better results by adding a couple drops of catfish scent to my baits.

Any bait that is not lively is a waste of time. We look for the kind of chubs that rattle around in the minnow bucket. Whenever the lid is opened they try to jump out. They struggle the entire time they are on the hooks.

Hooking lethargic chubs near the tail might make them more lively. This might kill the baits where the current is too swift, but the current is usually broken very close to the bottom. During a night on the Allegheny River near Kennerdell, my fishing partner, "Treat" Owens, hooked our less-lively-than-desirable chubs through the tail, while I hooked them through the lips. He had eight runs to my two. When I felt his line while the baits were out, I could feel that his tail-hooked chubs were much more lively than mine.

Using two chubs on each line has also proven to be an advantage. Lively bait is obviously important, so I assume that two baits are better than one because they cause twice as much commotion.

Catfishing is a waiting game. There is plenty of time to experiment. All these suggestions have been tested for many hours against logical alternatives. These guidelines for flathead fishing are simple but critical. If you try in the daytime, or while burning a lantern, or using the wrong bait, or in the wrong place, then I wager you will fail.

Tackle

Your tackle must be stout–no finesse, just power. I suggest nothing lighter than 20-pound line, and 50-pound would not be too much. Channel cats are a load, but pound for pound, flatheads pull harder.

When it feels the resistance after it's hooked, a flathead usually begins thrashing and rolling. As it flails back and forth, it can pop the line. Sometimes they can be brought quite close to the boat before showing their full strength. When they decide to run, they are tough to stop. It is best to let them go, but make them pay by setting the drag at about 12 pounds.

Check your line each time you catch a big flathead. During the battle the line rubs often against those boulders on the river bottom. Braided line, or abrasion-resistant monofilament, is best for this job.

A level-wind reel with a reliable drag, mounted on a matching rod, makes a perfect outfit for flathead fishing. Musky trolling rods or flipping rods do fine.

A long rod would be an advantage when fishing from shore because it would aid long casting. But fishing for flatheads from shore is difficult because they spend most of their time in the main channel. In most places it is difficult to reach the main channel from shore. Keeping a bait on the bottom of the channel is difficult from shore because the current drags the line downriver either into snags or out of the channel.

Serious flathead fishing almost demands a boat. Flathead territory is inherently snaggy. Fishing downstream is the only practical way to do it in most places.

There was a time when I agreed that the big catfish should not be classed as gamefish. That was years ago when I knew little about them. For excitement I rate them with our best gamefish. Their power is awesome. They grow huge. And best of all, if you follow these few, simple guidelines, your chances for success are excellent.

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Indelicate Touch

I read a detailed article on how to stain fine leader tippets with various solutions for various kinds of water and light and small flies. At about that time I met a man with a local reputation for catching trout at will in a fast, little stream that went past his cabin door, and I asked him about the leaders he used. He said 20-pound-test was about right.

He explained that trout in fast water don't have time to study things like tippets and that he wanted to be sure he had enough leader to throw a fish out on the bank "before it gets me into trouble." That's no discredit to the man who stained his leaders into camouflaged hues. He fished for different fish in very different waters and neither expert need apologize, even though I'd enjoy hearing a conversation between them.

He fished for different fish in very different waters and neither expert need apologize, even though I'd enjoy hearing a conversation between them.

I knew a prosperous angler who believed that a stealthy approach was essential to catching trout, and he went so far as to say that a tall angler is at a decided disadvantage in wading for sensitive fish. He said that because all good casters must stoop over anyway to maintain a low profile, a tall man is likely to have back trouble if he fishes very much. I thought that mentioning a tall wader has an advantage in very deep water might break his train of thought. I'm pretty short. He went on about sun reflections.

He said that none of the other materials could match bamboo for action and he wouldn't use any other kind of rod--and since he had no financial problems (he maintained a special "fishing secretary" in his business), he had quite a collection of cane rods in a variety of weights. Although they were costly examples of the rodmaker's art and showed the perfection of varnishing done in antiseptic quarters by masters, they tended to gleam a little in the sun, so he had all of them painted a dull battleship gray. It was disappointing to me that he didn't use camouflage coloring, but he said plain gray was better. This fit into the fishing pattern of a fellow who would sit or stand in a stream for 15 minutes before making a cast so the fish would "accept" him.

My old friend Jack had a somewhat different approach, and when I went with him to one of his favorite small streams, I was surprised to see him sloshing around like a mired draft horse.

"Oh, I'm not going to fish right here," Jack said. "I'm going to fish downstream from here in a few minutes after some of this mud and stuff gets down there. When I stir up the bottom it takes all kinds of things downstream and the fish think either some cows are cooling off or it has rained upstream. They'll strike almost anything then. I like to use Woolly Worms."

Harry Murray, who is one of my fishing heroes and who seems to believe some of the greatest technical water in the world is in Pennsylvania, often uses unnamed tiny flies to match insignificant things I cannot even find in a book on insects. Even Harry can descend into crudity when the occasion demands. On one limestone creek he'd had a typical Harry Murray day, and I saw him dupe numerous studious brown trout of considerable size. As darkness came on and I slunk farther downstream to avoid embarrassment, I heard drowning calf sounds from up above, and Harry finally came along with a self-satisfied grin.

"I saw these really big swirls over against the other bank," he reported, "but I couldn't tell what the fish was after and he didn't seem to want to bother with any of the little stuff the other fish were taking, so I put on a great big thing, threw it over there and popped it like a bass bug. He banged it and tore me up. Sure has been a good day."

I have fished a "technical" creek near where it enters a river where some pretty big brown trout are likely to take a deep streamer or gigantic nymph as the fall spawning season comes on. I have waded the creek gently and caught a modest number of its uppity trout, using unimportant little things with great care.

When I stir up the bottom it takes all kinds of things downstream and the fish think either some cows are cooling off or it has rained upstream.

One fall evening I came back from the river, mainly by moonlight and listening to night noises. I waded the little creek that looked black down through the willows. Since no one was watching, I threw a gargantuan Muddler Minnow at a broad bulge in a streak of moon reflection and it is unnecessary to tell what happened. I have never said much about it.

Anglers Currents

Celebrate the River

June is Rivers Month in Pennsylvania, a perfect time to "celebrate the river." Take a moment during the month to reflect on clean water. If you're having trouble focusing on how important that is, just consider these few benefits of the Susquehanna River, the longest non-navigable river in North America, and currently enjoying continually improving quality.

* Recreation: Larry Jackson, the Commission's Area 7 Fisheries Manager, says that if you're looking for smallmouth bass, you don't have to look farther than the Susquehanna. "From Sunbury to York Haven, the only slight and localized limitations on smallmouth bass numbers and sizes are habitat-related. On the river between Middletown and Duncannon, that section is classic smallmouth bass habitat, with rock outcrops and shelves for cover. You can find bass virtually the entire breadth of the river," he says.

And, he adds, one of the best recreational benefits of fishing the Susquehanna is that you don't need a lot of high-tech equipment to do it. "In the shadow of our state capitol, you can fish the Susquehanna in an old pair of sneakers," he says. "Wet wading is one of the traditional ways of fishing the river during the summer. It's an enjoyable, cool way to fish the river."

* Environment: Jackson says, that the incidence of major historical pollutants, such as mine drainage and untreated sewage, have been greatly reduced. But the river still needs attention. "Non-point source pollutants, such as runoff from agricultural lands, feed lots, streets and parking lots, are much more difficult to pinpoint," says Jackson. "The effects are more subtle, in the ways that they affect water clarity, plant growth or increased sedimentation. That might result in elimination of one year class, then another, and suddenly a species is in decline."

As subtle as the dangers are, Pennsylvanians are working hard to reduce nutrient pollution. In 1992, erosion control practices on 500 farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed held back 383 tons of nitrogen, 197 tons of phosphorous and 74,360 tons of sediment from dropping into nearby streams.

* Human: Finally and simply, we "need" a clean river. Two of the most important human necessities met by surface waters in Pennsylvania are both as sustenance and cleanser. We need clean water to drink at the same time that we require rivers to dilute our filtered wastes. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in 1990, more than five million pounds of toxic chemicals were poured into surface waters or public sewers in Pennsylvania's 28-county Chesapeake Bay watershed.

During this Rivers Month, celebrate the importance of clean water. If you're looking for an organized family activity to do that, consider attending the Susquehanna River Celebration on Saturday, June 11. The event, which features music, booths and live theater, all demonstrate the theme, "We all Live Downstream," and is from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Riverfront Park in Harrisburg.

For more information, call the Chesapeake Bay Education office at 717-236-1006.--*Julie Lalo.*

Mystery fish

I fish the lower Beaver and Ohio rivers, and every once in a while I see a sizable fish swimming with its snout out of the water. When I cast my lure its way, it doesn't seem interested. Can you tell me what kind of fish this might be?--*Jack McKain, Beaver, PA.*

It is difficult to say precisely what kind of fish this is. However, I have seen muskellunge swim this way on other bodies of water. Carp also may come to the surface to feed on floating matter, and paddlefish, which are stocked in the Ohio River, may also exhibit this type of behavior. However, my first guess is that this fish is a muskellunge.--*Craig W. Billingsley, Area Fisheries Manager, Area 1.*

Incorrect number

The article "Early Season Trout in the Poconos," by Ed Howey, in the February *Angler* listed (717) 787-6747 as the phone number to call to obtain Type 3 County General Highway Maps. As you've probably learned, that number is incorrect. Could you please tell me what the correct number is? You and your staff do a fantastic job of keeping the sportsmen of Pennsylvania informed on all the great fishing and boating opportunities available to us. Keep up the good work!--*Harvey A. McGowan, Philadelphia, PA.*

The correct phone number to obtain maps from the PennDOT General Sales Store is (717) 787-6746.--*ed.*

No respect

In May of 1992 my two companions and I were trout fishing on Pine Creek above Cammal when a stocking truck backed in above where we were fishing. We put down our rods to help stock the fish and then watched as they swam away.

Soon after the truck left, a pickup pulled into the parking lot. It was obvious by the urgency of the three men leaving the vehicle that they had seen the stocking truck. They appeared to be a grandfather, father and son. Soon they were drifting minnows through the stocked schools of fish. The middle-aged man was having the best luck and was spreading his catch between the stringers of his son and his father.

I was amazed at how roughly this man handled the fish as he ripped them off the hook in his haste to get his line back in the water. He stopped only when a young woman pulled into the parking lot and called to the group. As soon as she left they were back in the water with the middle-aged man catching fish after fish.

When he suddenly realized that we were watching him, he tore the hook out of the trout he had just dragged over the rocks and kicked the fish toward the water. He then called to his son and father, informing them it was time to leave. All three men piled into the truck. The engine revved and they were gone.

I find this behavior appalling. Yes, I am a catch-and-release fisherman, but I don't find fault with those who fish within the laws we are all supposed to obey. I hope I never meet up with that group of fishermen again, at least not until they learn to respect our natural resources.--*Ronald Dietz, Spring City, PA.*

Lake Erie pollution

My wife and I have eaten more than three pounds of steelhead in the last few weeks. We became concerned about our health after reading an article about toxic chemicals in the Great Lakes.

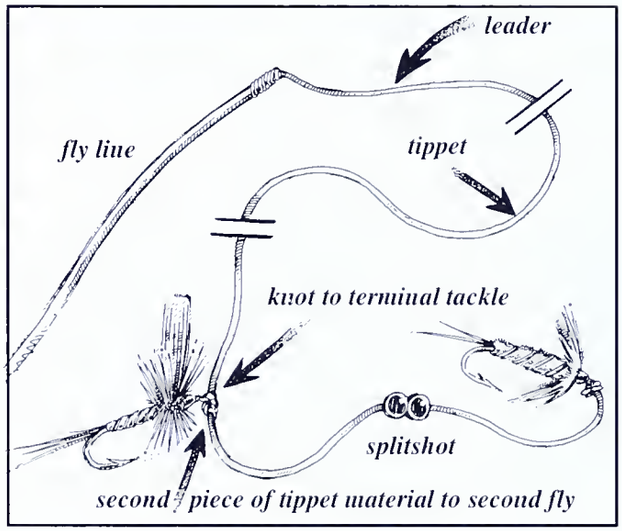
PA Angler has become my bible of fishing guidance in the last few years. The magazine should run a regular update on the seriousness of this problem.

Each month the *Angler* is an uplifting sight in the mailbox and the articles are excellent. Somber information should be kept to a minimum to preserve this aura, but the seriousness of pollution should always be front and center and never left unchecked or unpublished.–*Thomas A. Turiak, Lower Burrell, PA.*



I've always dreamed of catching a trout this large. I think my chances of catching a fish like this are slim, so I decided to make one. Wood sculpting is my hobby, and this sculpture is five feet long.
–Alvin Lambert, Easton, PA.

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



An easy, tangle-free method of fishing two flies at the same time is to attach a second section of tippet material to your dropper fly. Tie a fly on as usual, but move the knot to one side of the eye of the hook. Tie another fairly short length of tippet to the eye of this fly, moving the knot to the other side of the eye. Then attach your point fly to the other end of the second tippet section. If you are using nymphs, put a small splitshot directly between these two flies to help the rig get to the bottom.

Bass do not feed as often in the summer as they do in the post-spawn period. Because of this, it is important that your lures match the bass's food as closely as possible in size, color, action and depth.

During the summer, look for bass in water 8 to 12 feet deep with a temperature of 75 to 85 degrees. Search for fish on the deep sides of points and the breaklines separating deep water from shallow water.

After spring spawning, some bass migrate from a lake into feeder creeks instead of heading for the deeper water of lakes and ponds. Look for creeks with a current, which helps to add oxygen to the water and might mean cooler temperatures. Work slowly up these creeks with a spinnerbait, casting to structure.

When nymphing with small flies, it is often difficult to detect the strike. Concentrate on the point where the fly enters the water, keeping your eyes on the ring that the fly makes on the surface. Draw an imaginary ring around the fly in your mind, and move this mental "ring" at the same speed as the current. Set the hook when you see any movement, or flash, within this "ring."

When tying small flies, it is very important to work close to the hook, keeping a short thread when tying in the materials. This short-thread technique helps you maintain control over the materials. Be sure not to crowd the eye of the hook so that you have plenty of room to tie a thread-head to finish the fly.

The age of a bass can be determined by counting the growth rings, called *annuli*, on its scales. Although growth rates of bass vary from state to state, few bass ever live longer than 10 years.

Swiftly flowing water is extremely tiring to bass. They move into the current to feed and then return to the eddies along the current. Often, they hold on the downstream side of objects in the slacker water. In swift water, use 1/2-ounce or 3/4-ounce jigs, and in very fast water, use 7/8-ounce jigs.

illustration- Ted Walke

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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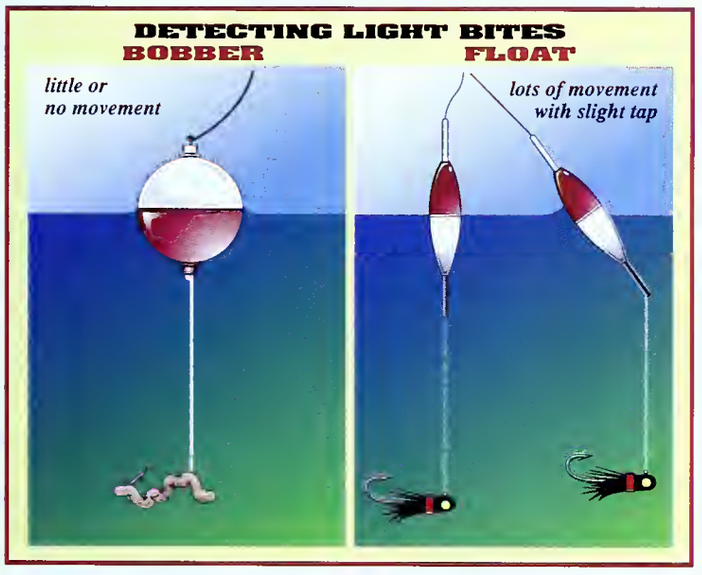
SMART Angler's Notebook

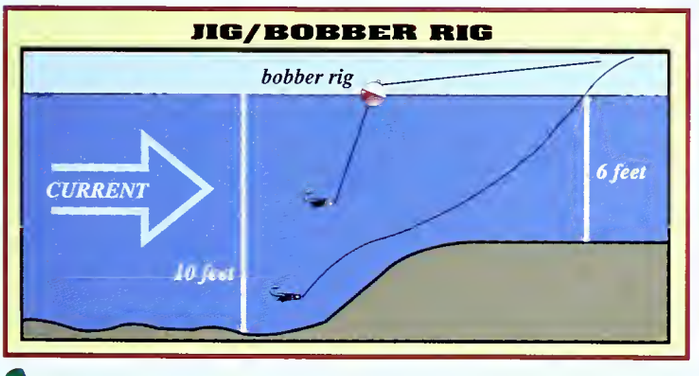
by Carl Richardson

FLOATS and BOBBERS

What's the difference between a float and a bobber? About a buck and a half–bobbers cost a quarter, a float, $1.75. To most anglers, bobbers are the round red-and-white ones, and the long, thin ones are called *floats*. No matter what you call them, they are useful tools. Not only do they signal when a fish takes your bait, but both are good at putting a lure or bait in front of the fish and keeping it there.

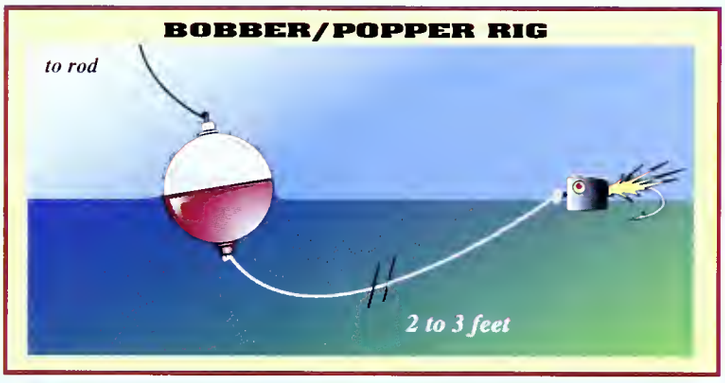
Round bobbers are great for fish that take a bait with lots of gusto. Floats are best with light-biting fish like crappies or walleyes.



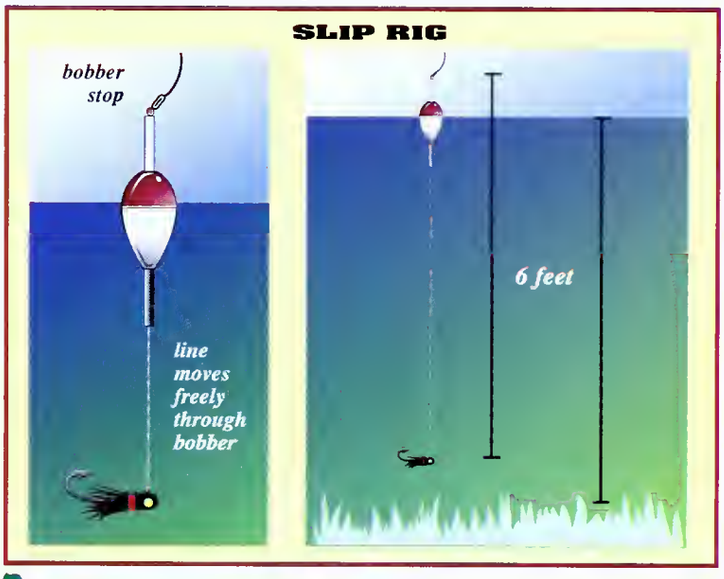


SMALLMOUTH BASS were hugging the bottom in 6 feet of water at the tail of a deep pool. Cast 1/8-ounce jig with a plastic tail into the pool and it either hung up on the rocks or the current kept it from reaching the fish. Attached a bobber 4 or 5 feet from the tail to keep it in front of fish. Bobber or float, whatever they are called, they have earned a place in the SMART Angler's tackle box.

BLUEGILLS were eating insects from the surface and wouldn't take small spinners or jigs. Tied on small cork popper–a dry fly and a wet fly worked, too–attached a small (1/4-inch to 1/2-inch) bobber one to three feet from the fly. Cast near the fish, slowly retrieve, or let it drift. Fish hammered popper!



Remember to keep no more than a rod's length of line between the lure and the bobber or float. The rig is difficult to cast if the distance is longer.



CRAPPIES were in a brush pile covered by 10 feet of water. Slabs would hit the lure, if I could get it to them, but I kept hanging up. Rigged up a slip bobber. Put the bobber stop about 10 feet from the jig. Managed to catch a few and didn't lose any jigs.

A slip bobber is one that is free to move up and down the line. To keep a lure or bait at a certain depth, put a bobber stop between the bobber and the rod. The stop controls the depth of the lure. This is a great rig for fishing jigs and other lures from shore, or when you can't get the boat close to the fish. This setup keeps the bait where the fish are, and gives you a chance to work the lure.

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Largemouth Bass



Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight
5.5	0.1	11	0.6	16.5	2.3	22	5.9
6	0.1	11.5	0.7	17	2.6	22.5	6.4
5	0.1	12	0.8	17.5	2.8	23	6.9
	0.1	12.5	0.9	18	3.1	23.5	7.4
5	0.2	13	1.1	18.5	3.4	24	7.9
	0.2	13.5	1.2	19	3.7	24.5	8.4
5	0.3	14	1.4	19.5	4.0	25	9.0
	0.3	14.5	1.5	20	4.4	25.5	9.6
5	0.4	15	1.7	20.5	4.7	26	10.2
	0.5	15.5	1.9	21	5.1	26.5	10.9
5	0.5	16	2.1	21.5	5.5	27	11.6

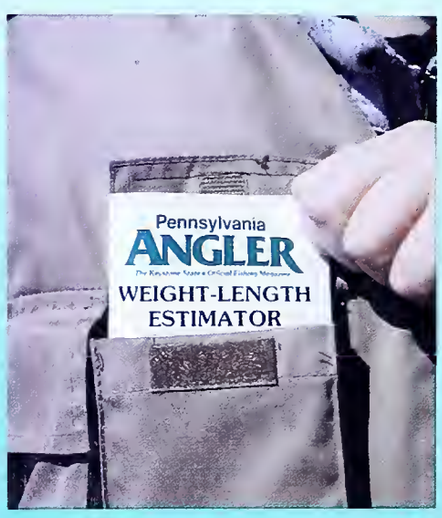
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	Purebred Weight	Tiger Weight
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.2	0.2
	0.2	0.2
	0.2	0.2
	0.3	0.3
	0.3	0.3
	0.3	0.3
	0.4	0.4
	0.5	0.4

Inches	Purebred Weight	Tiger Weight
14.5	0.7	0.6

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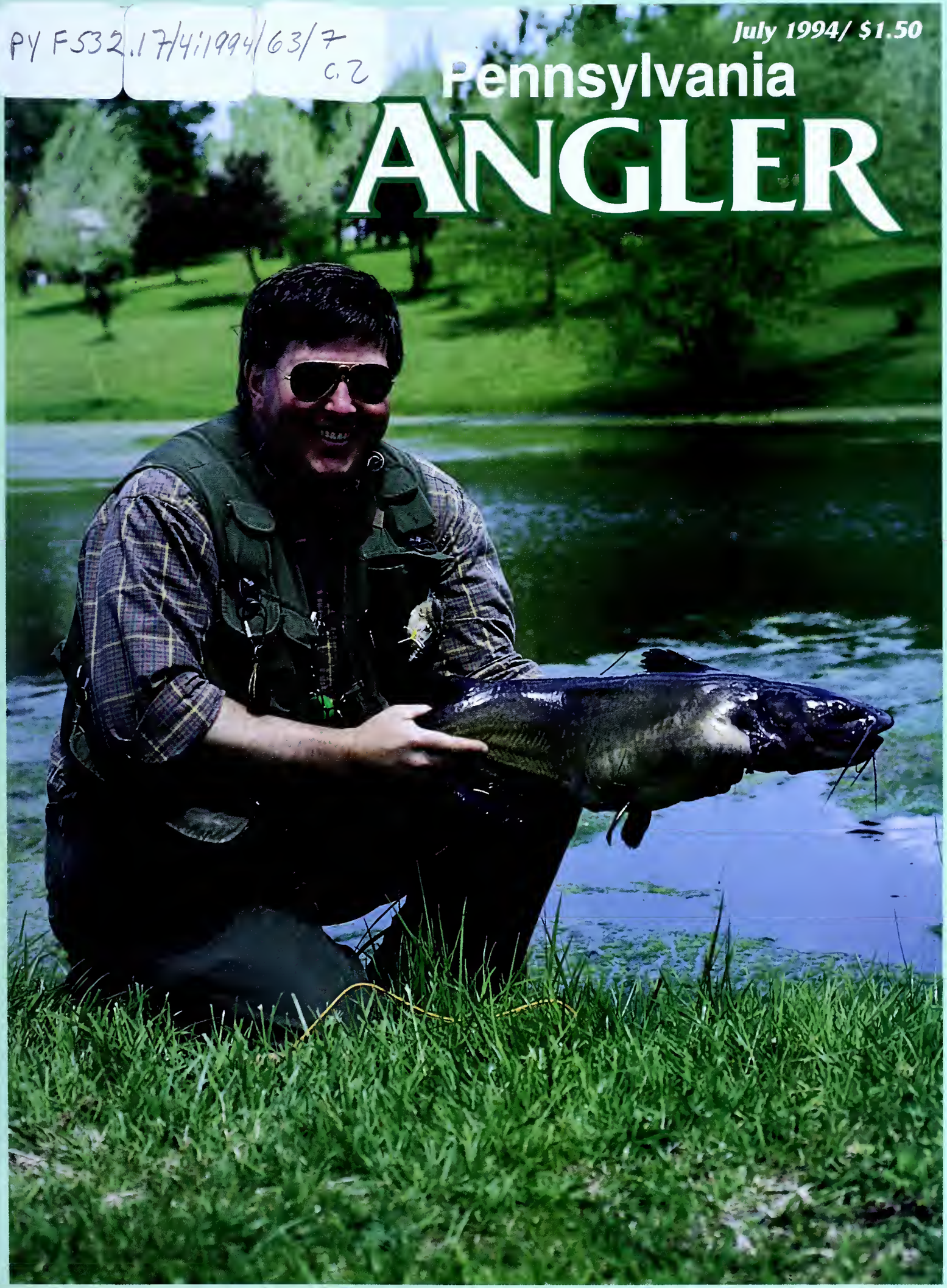
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Straight Talk

Strategic Planning–Year 2004

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's planning effort began some seven years ago with a vision that a resource-based, long-term plan was needed to meet its resource obligations and angler and boater interests. The proposal was discussed repeatedly, and it became evident that it was time to make the vision a reality. Thus, the Commission's comprehensive planning effort began in earnest with the hiring of a Resource Planning Coordinator at the end of 1989.

It was recognized that as we approached the 21st century, there would be significant, complex demands placed on Pennsylvania's aquatic resources. As guardians, the Commission would have to pursue a long-term management direction that sustained the resource and still fulfilled the needs and expectations of its customers. It appeared necessary to reverse any detrimental trends, protect the health of the resource, meet the needs of anglers and boaters, resolve user conflicts, increase public awareness, develop more partnerships with other government agencies, conservation groups and sportsmen's clubs, and involve the general public in the process. Development of a strategic plan would give us the direction needed.



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

The purposes of this strategic plan are to articulate the mission and vision of the agency, establish programs and quantify objectives, identify challenges, set strategies and force a comprehensive look at current programs. The plan illustrates to the public the status and needs of the resource. The plan also provides a structured way for the Commission to conduct operations, and assists in making program decisions to meet expectations.

Agency staff and Commissioners had to agree on a mission statement. It was decided that the mission of the Commission was to "provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources." To accomplish this mission, it was important the agency have a progressive vision of the future. A vision that promoted a healthy and stable water environment with abundant and diverse fish populations, and one that included safe and convenient public boating and fishing access.

As the planning effort progressed, goals and objectives were formulated that would reflect the best possible outcomes we could hope to achieve in protecting and managing the water resources in the Commonwealth. Goals were formulated to 1) protect, conserve and enhance aquatic resources, 2) provide for the protection of aquatic resource users, and 3) meet the expectations of anglers and boaters.

Next, the staff began reviewing current recreational opportunities and trends. They considered future ways to protect and enhance the resource and ways to inform you, our customers, what our intentions were. The agency developed ways to seek public opinion on future programs, identify needed changes, and incorporate sound resource management. Specific functions for consideration included fishing, boating, habitat and water quality, aquatic health and diversity, and agency management practices.

The next step was to review current programs and activities and provide future direction. The stage was set to complete the development of a draft strategic plan that addressed the major aquatic resources of Pennsylvania, both natural and manmade, which had similar characteristics and use potential. Each habitat type was described and long-term management objectives were proposed.

The draft plan has been formulated using six resource categories. They include coldwater streams, warmwater streams, large rivers, impoundments, Lake Erie and tributaries, and watersheds and wetlands. The plan focuses on these different types of water resources, their protection and enhancement, and the experiences the user can expect to achieve. Protecting and sustaining the resource without damaging habitat integrity were paramount in developing the plan.

User education and individual protection is recognized as playing a significant role in maintaining future resource integrity. Regulations acceptable to you, the user, will play a vital role in delivering sustainable levels of recreation through the next decade.

Then the Commission thought it was time to take the planning effort to the public to gauge its progress in setting its long-term goals and to incorporate public opinions and ideas. Special concern was aimed at discovering any program directions we may have overlooked, priorities for consideration, working together to develop a final plan and ways we could be more responsive to public interests, and attain common objectives. The public roundtable session, held last January, brought to light a broader question: How do we get more people directly involved in our efforts?

Roundtable attendees proposed regional participation. As a result, eight regional planning and public involvement workshops are scheduled to gather input for finalizing the strategic plan and determining the direction the Commission should take during the next decade. Other workshop goals are to increase contact among the Commission staff and the public, expand public relations, establish agency leadership, carry out education and awareness efforts, develop an appreciation for program management, and broaden the Commission's staff interaction with the people we serve. A pilot workshop session was conducted in Hershey on June 25. You can contribute by attending these workshops: Northwest, July 30; Northwest central, September 10; Northeast central, September 11; Southwest central, September 17; Southwest, September 18; Northeast, September 24; and Southeast, September 25. A ninth workshop may be scheduled in October or November in the Lake Erie area.

Additional information on specific locations and start times will be announced. Interested participants will be asked to preregister by telephone or postcard. Contacts will be established with individuals and fishing, boating and environmental groups. Legislators will be advised. Copies of the draft plan will be available on request in July or at the meeting sites. I hope you can attend and share your views.

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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

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This issue's front-cover photograph was taken by Barry & Cathy Beck.

Sunfish

The first fish I caught, about 42 or 43 years ago (I'm 46), were sunnies. In my late teens and early 20s, I fished exclusively with a fly rod. I often sought sunfish. I owned a 12-foot boat with a 4-horsepower engine then. I'd catch limits of really big, unsuspecting sunnies from the areas of lakes unreachable to shore anglers. When my wife and I had children, the kids' first fishing trips focused on sunfish.

As a child, I noticed that my parents almost always kept panfish to eat, but they kept only as many as they knew we'd consume. When I'd catch those giant-sized slabs from my boat, the panfish population seemed limitless. Still, I released nearly all those fish. When my wife and I began taking our own kids fishing, the kids, too, were taught as a matter of course that if we kept fish, we'd take only what we were going to eat and put back the rest.

Sunnies are pretty much everywhere, and they're most often year-round, willing biters. That's why it's so important to apply conservation lessons to these fish–and to all fish. For me, that's more than 40 years talking: If you keep fish, take no more than what you can use and release the rest.–*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*

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BOTTOM-BOUNCERS *for Walleyes*

by Jeff Knapp

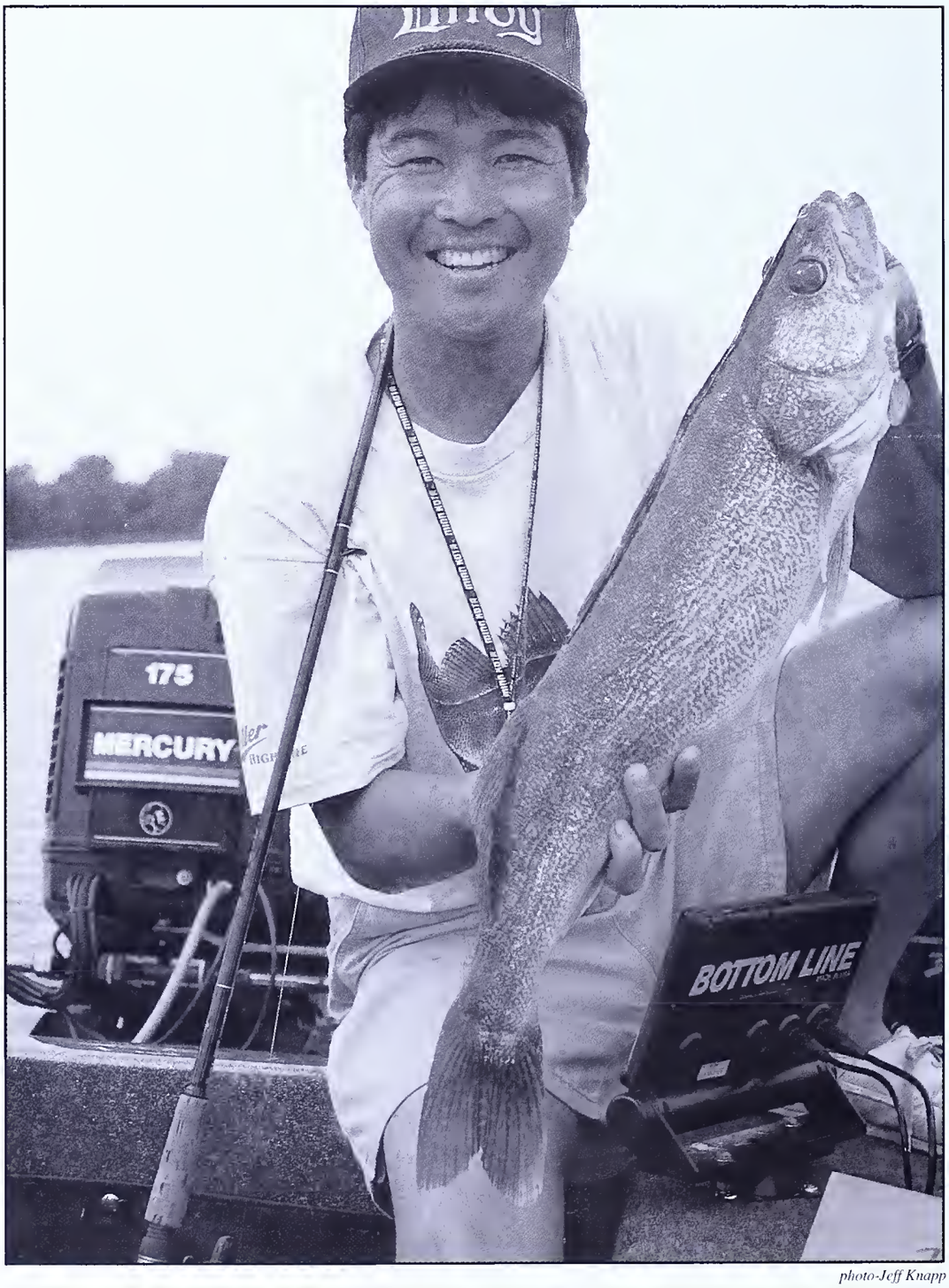


photo-Jeff Knapp

The sinker bounces along on the bottom. With each bounce, a stop-and-go action is imparted to the rig, causing the blade to function in a tantalizing, intermittent fashion.

From a traditional point of view, Pymatuning Reservoir isn't the best place for a summertime walleye outing. Nevertheless, my sons Jason and Michael, and I as well, enjoy taking an annual combined camping/fishing trip there, and the time we had available last summer was in July, during the season's most intense heatwave.

When we arrived at the lake, the fishing report was dismal. Few walleyes had been taken. What little action that was occurring was taking place in a basin in which fish-attracting cribs had been dropped by a sportsmen's group. The water depth was about 17 feet. As we pitched camp that evening, I considered the best way to try to catch those fish.



The morning brought a continuation of the hot, windless weather. With a cooler full of drinks aboard, we launched the boat and headed out to the cribs. The structures were easy to find on the sonar unit, and with their general location pinpointed, I rigged up rods.

During the springtime, presentation for Pymatuning's walleyes is a simple affair. Jigs handle about 90 percent of the needs. But it would be difficult to move a jig along at the speed needed to cover that much water, and at a pace likely to trigger a walleye in the warm water. Instead, I reached into my tackle bag and retrieved a handful of heavy lead sinkers fashioned on V-shaped pieces of wire–bottom-bouncers. I secured a bottom-bouncer to each of our lines, and then fastened a spinner rig–a three-foot snell with a colorful spinner, beads and two snelled hooks–to the bouncer. After spicing the spinner rigs with 'crawlers, we let out an appropriate amount of line on each rod, and then dropped them into rod holders.

Though the bottom was cluttered with cribs and stumps, the wire tentacle leading off the bottom-bouncer's lead weight kept the rigs from hanging up. When a rod would go into a bow, it was from the weight of a walleye, not a snag. Though the intense heat limited our sessions on the water to a couple of hours each, we put several walleyes in the boat per outing. The bottom-bouncers were an intricate part of our success.

Bottom-bouncing sinkers have been around for a long time, but they've only enjoyed popularity regionally, especially in the Dakota reservoirs located on the Missouri River. Hence, you sometimes hear them referred to as a "Missouri River bottom-bouncer." In recent years there's been an increase in the use of bottom-bouncers, because of their proven effectiveness in competitive walleye fishing events such as the Professional Walleye Trail. In Pennsylvania, however, most anglers are unaware of the existence of bottom-bouncers, let alone the details of how to use them.

It's not surprising that bouncers are taking some time to catch on. Walleye fishing has become a game of finesse–thin lines, light jigs and sensitive rods are the tools of the angler skilled in the more subtle points of presentation. By contrast, bouncers are heavy, course and insensitive. But just like finesse tackle, bottom bouncers are tools, with a select purpose, and they have a place in the serious walleye angler's bag of tricks.

A bottom-bouncing sinker is a lead weight molded onto a V-shaped wire, one similar to a spinnerbait frame, with one leg of the V about twice as long as the other. The lead, which in most instances is cylindrical, is attached to the longer leg from about a third to halfway down. The protruding wire acts as a "feeler," causing the sinker to ride over snaggy bottoms, particularly rock and gravel. The shorter leg of the bouncer is provided with a swivel snap, to which the snell of the presentation is attached. A line tie is twisted into the wire at the nose of the bouncer (point of the "V"), to which the running line is fastened. Bottom-bouncers can range in weight from one-quarter ounce to several ounces, but the sizes most often used in typical walleye situations run from a half-ounce to about two ounces.

Many walleye fishing refinements are the result of competitive walleye fishing events. Even though the aspects of tournaments might not appeal to all anglers, there's no argument that lessons learned at such activities broaden the list of options for the non-competing weekend angler. The use of bottom-bouncers is just one example.

Ted Takasaki has enjoyed excellent success in major walleye tournaments, and considers the bottom-bouncer sinker an important tool in his fishing.

"They are a great way to present live bait or lures just off the bottom," says Takasaki. "They are simplistic, and that's what makes them great."

According to Takasaki, bottom-bouncers work in a variety

of situations, but they shine best in certain types of lakes and reservoirs.

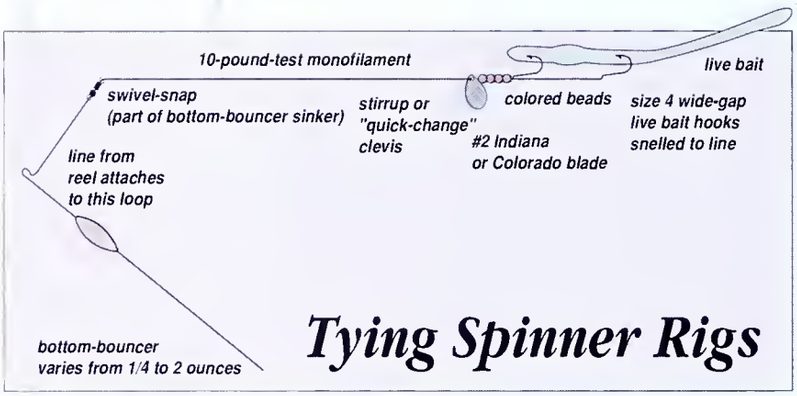
"Anytime you have a flat, featureless bottom, and you want to cover some territory, that is the perfect application for a bottom-bouncer," he says.

Ted uses one presentation in conjunction with the bouncer in particular. "Spinners are my favorite presentation, no doubt," Takasaki says. "I also fish live-bait rigs behind bottom-bouncers, and some shallow-running crankbaits."

What Ted calls "spinners" are more technically known as spinner rigs, what my sons and I used that hot, summer weekend on Pymatuning. Spinner rigs are a snell to which hooks, bead and a spinner blade have been attached. Spinners can be dressed with minnows or ribbon leeches, but 'crawlers are the more common live bait.

Even though they are available commercially, spinners are easy to rig. Some tackle shops and mail order houses, Cabela's, Inc., in particular, carry all the components necessary to tie up a mess of spinner rigs, as well as pre-tied rigs.

The effectiveness of the bottom bouncer/spinner combo is easy to understand if you visualize it at work. The sinker bounces along on the bottom. With each bounce, a stop-and-go action is imparted to the rig, causing the blade to function in a tantalizing, intermittent fashion.



The recipe for tying your own spinners is simple. First, assemble the necessary ingredients: a spool of quality monofilament fishing line (8- or 10-pound test), an assortment of colored beads (in "walleye" colors such as lime green, chartreuse, orange and pearl), Indiana-style spinner blades in sizes 1 through 3 (same color assortment as beads), clevises (either brass stirrup or quick-change), and boxes of sizes 4 and 6 light-wire live-bait hooks (turned-out eye).

Snell lengths for spinner rigs commonly range from about three to five feet long, so cut off a piece of mono with this in mind. The first step is to snell on the hooks.

If the rig is intended to be dressed with a minnow, snell on a single size 4 hook. For leeches and 'crawlers, tie on two hooks. I like the size 6 for this, and space the hooks about two inches apart for leeches, three to four inches for 'crawlers.

A basic fishing knot book illustrates the correct way to secure the hooks to the line via the "snell" method, in which the line is wrapped around the shank of the hook, then run through the eye. It's important to snell the hooks, rather than to use a knot like an improved clinch, because with this tandem hook set-up the hooks "pull" better and result in more solid hook-ups.

Because of the scope of weights bottom-bouncers are made in, it's easy to rig up with sinkers of adequate size to allow fairly fast boat movement, usually a forward troll.

"Let's say I'm fishing water 20 feet deep. I double the depth, and fish with about 40 feet of line out. I should be able to go slowly enough, with a one-ounce bottom bouncer, to keep things on the bottom. That keeps the line at about a 45-degree angle."

Conventional rigging and jigging rods won't be adequate for pulling bottom-bouncers. Ted recommends two-handed casting rods and level-wind reels.

"What I like is a long, flexible rod with a soft tip, not a fast-action rod. When the fish takes that bait, he's able to hold onto it a little longer. As the boat moves forward, the fish actually hooks itself. With that soft, flexible tip and limber quality throughout the entire rod, it gives you a lot higher hook-up percentage. If you try to rear back and set the hook with a spinner rig, you lose more of them than if you leave the rod in the rod holder until the very last second. Then you just want to lift the rod out, keeping steady pressure on the fish."

Bottom-bouncers may be new to many Pennsylvania anglers, but they are a versatile tool that puts more walleyes in the boat.

Companies that Market and Manufacture Bottom-Bouncers

Contact the following companies for product catalogs that include bottom-bouncer sinkers:

- Lindy/Little Joe Tackle Company, P.O. Box C, Brainerd, MN 56401
- Northland Tackle Company, 3209 Mill St. N.E., Bemidji, MN 56601
- Bait Rigs Tackle Co., P.O. Box 44153, Madison, WI 53741
- Cabela's, Inc., 812 13th Ave., Sidney, NE 69160
- Luhr-Jensen, P.O. 297, Hood River, OR 97031
- System Tackle, P.O. Box 269-IF, Lake Park, MN 56554
- Quick Change System, P.O. Box 442, Pierre, SD 57501–*JK*.

With hooks in place, string on a few beads. I generally use the beads of the same color per rig, instead of mixing them, but this is merely a personal preference. About four or five beads is right, enough to space the blade up off the front hook. Next comes the clevis and blade. I like the plastic quick-change clevis. Not only does it allow you to change blade colors easily, but it's not as abrasive to the line as is the brass model. Add one more bead above the clevis.

Finish the rig by tying on a small barrel swivel.

The only negative I've seen in dealing with spinner rigs is, in storing them, a method that allows them to be retrieved without a major hassle. A couple of commercial devices are available for wrapping spinners for storage.

Ted Takasaki showed me a great way to store spinners in a very economical fashion. Purchase a length of foam pipe insulation, the soft kind that is split so it can be clipped over exposed pipe. A one- to two-foot chunk of this stuff holds one to two dozen spinners. Wrap each spinner by clipping the barrel swivel into the split in the insulation. Then simply wrap the rig on, sinking the trailing hook into the foam when complete.–*JK*.

graphic-Ted Walke

The Art of FLOAT FISHING

by Darl Black



The objective of a float is threefold- first, to get a bait where you want it; next, to present the bait precisely; and finally, to show the bite.

An open tackle box usually reveals several in easy reach. A bait fisherman inevitably has one prominently rigged on one of his lines. This isn't some mystery item. It's a bobber. Or is it a float? Bobber...float? What's the difference?

To most anglers, they are the same. To others, it's the difference between night and day.

Discriminating anglers view floats as high-tech. Bobbers, on the other hand, are crude, and at times, completely inefficient. Floats are engineered to exact specifications. Bobbers are mass-produced without a specific presentation in mind.

Remember the bobber

Who can say he never used one of the round red-and-white globes? Not me. I grew into fishing by using bobbers.

I was a youngster on my very first fishing trip, and Dad rigged a rod for me that had a bobber affixed about two feet above the bait. Of course, I don't actually remember that initial outing, but my father described it for me on several occasions.

However, I do recall the first tackle box of my own presented to me a few years later. It contained a round bobber and a double stem bobber. "Use the round bobber for bass and walleyes, and the stem bobber for crappies," explained Dad, conveying all bobber fishing knowledge of the late 1950s.

For the next decade, my annual spring ritual included purchasing several new bobbers. I bought little ones to suspend garden worms for sunfish and large ones to hold shiners for northern pike. I never considered fishing for crappies without a minnow and bobber. A tackle box without an ample supply of clip-on bobbers seemed almost sacrilegious.

There was an exception to the clip-on hollow plastic bobbers. In the late 1960s, egg-shaped egg-size wood bobbers were the rage on Pymatuning Reservoir. These were painted white, with a screw eye on one end. The line from the reel was tied to the screw eye, as was a two-foot leader with a spinner and nightcrawler. These weighted bobbers allowed distance casting from shore. They were used at night with a slow retrieve for walleyes cruising near the surface. I can't remember actually catching a fish with this contraption, however.



photo-Dart Black

During the fishing revolution of the 1970s, bobbers were labeled as inferior technology. With sonar, graphite rods and structure fishing sweeping the angling scene, bobbers seemed doomed to extinction. Perhaps the concept of using a floating strike indicator might have been relegated only to novice fishermen in the U.S. if not for the introduction of European floats.

Americanization of floats

For decades while North American anglers found it relatively easy to catch fish because of the abundance of gamefish populations, European anglers were forced to develop presentations with sophisticated floats to gain an edge over highly pressured fish.

"Today floats are revolutionizing American fishing," says Mick Thill, a five-time World Match Fishing Champion. "European floats are super-sensitive and practically neutrally buoyant. They fish circles around traditional American bobbers."

Thill, an American citizen who spent 26 years in England, learned European advanced "bobber" techniques. Since returning to the U.S. several years ago, he has been spreading the word about float fishing. "The vast majority of American fishermen are casual anglers," says Thill. "They are not bass tournament anglers with mandates to use artificial lures only. The potential of using specifically designed floats in still water and flowing water for crappies, bluegills, trout, steelhead, walleyes and even bass is unlimited. The more pressured these species become in the U.S., the greater the need for high-tech float presentations."

The objective of a float is threefold–first, to get a bait where you want it; next, to present the bait precisely; and finally, to show the bite.

Can't ordinary bobbers accomplish the same thing? Perhaps, but not as effectively as specially designed floats. A haphazard attempt with a bobber is turned into artistic endeavor when the correct float is matched to the situation.

Each float is designed to balance with a specific number of splitshot and to function in specific conditions. Even though ordinary round bobbers are made in small, medium and large sizes, they are not capable of achieving the neutral buoyancy of floats or showing the lightest nibble. Nor are bobbers designated for flat water, rough water, flowing water, etc.

Bobbers are made to float high on the surface and resist being pulled underwater. Properly rigged floats slip beneath the surface with minimal resistance—therefore, they are less likely to spook the biting fish.

Floats in action

Whether you call it a bobber or a float, these fishing tools assist anglers. Perhaps the most common float situation revolves around panfish in the shallows. Whether the bait is a garden worm, minnow, cricket, mealworm or maggot, a float is used to keep the bait from settling to the bottom out of sight of most crappies and 'gills.

Even though the bait is lightweight and the targeted fish are small, some anglers may be observed using a bobber large enough to support several ounces.

An appropriate float for calm shallows would be long and slender with minimum buoyancy. They go by names like Mini-Shy Bite, Shy Bite and Lite Bite. Switching to a sensitive float can result immediately in an increase in the number of fish caught.

These ultra-sensitive sticks are fixed floats–they stay on the line at the position selected. Small silicone sleeves are used to secure the European float to the line, instead of metal spring clips on American bobbers, which can nick monofilament. When fishing the shallows with bait set two to five feet deep, a fixed float is not a problem.

But what happens when crappies and big bluegills move deeper in the summer? If you need to hang a minnow right above a brush pile in 15 feet of water, that fixed bobber is more of a hindrance than a help. Enter the slip float. Slip floats slide up

and down the line. The depth setting is controlled by attaching a small bobber stop. The stop passes through the rod guides and winds onto the spool. Meanwhile, the float slides down the line to the baited hook or jig, placing all the weight at the end of the line for an easy cast. Following the cast as the bait begins to sink, line slides through the float until the stop is reached.

Bobber stops are offered in several forms—all small enough to pass through guides with minimal interference during a cast. These include small neoprene stops slipped from a wire loop onto the line, nail knots tied with braided line, and flexible plastic tabs with tiny holes which may be slid up the line. Sliding beads are generally used in conjunction with a bobber stop to prevent the float from jamming on the stop.



When using larger, livelier baits for walleyes, a waggler-style float is a better tool. Wagglers are designed with larger bodies to float heavier baits and long stems on top for visibility in heavy waves. This style of float is available in sizes to support weights ranging from 1/16-ounce to 3/8-ounce.

Wagglers can be rigged either as a fixed float or a slip float. Either way, enough weight is used to keep the buoyant body below the surface so only the colorful tip is visible to the angler. This is the best kind of float to achieve long casts, particularly when fishing from shore.

Most anglers admit floats work fine with live bait for panfish and walleyes. But what possible function can a float serve when fishing artificial lures for bass? Actually, the slip float concept can play a vital role in bass situations, too.

Bass anglers know how tight-lipped largemouth bass can be under bluebird skies following the passage of a cold front. Often you know right where bass are holding—under a dock, tight to a particular stump, in the shade of a deep weedline—but you are unsuccessful in getting them to bite by casting and retrieving a lure. If only you could suspend a tiny jig right in front of their noses long enough to tease them into striking. One answer is a center-slider slip float with a small plastic grub or tube jig. With line running through a slip float, a soft-plastic teaser can be danced up and down within a very small strike window at any depth simply by lifting and dropping the rod tip.

I have used a float to drift a tiny marabou jig across rock piles for smallmouths, too. The properly adjusted depth setting on the slip float presents an irresistible 1/32-ounce black marabou jig skimming along the top of the rocks without becoming lodged in the crevices. Even the most lure-shy bronzeback cannot turn up its nose at such a tiny morsel.

Fishing flowing water opens up an entire new arena for the float angler. The most successful steelhead anglers are ones who use a float to keep the bait moving with the current. However, the bait (usually skein on a yarn fly) must drift naturally.

Thill, an avid steelhead angler, stresses that the surface water is moving faster than subsurface water, with the slowest water near the bottom. In clear streams you can actually observe what happens. A hook baited with a cluster of eggs drifts naturally just off the bottom for a few feet until the float on the surface is moved downstream faster than the bait. Suddenly the bait is swept off the bottom just as it is approaching the lair of a big steelhead.

"The secret to this kind of current fishing with floats is to control the speed of the float with the rod tip," says Thill. "You need to hold back the downstream movement of the float so it matches the slower movement of the baited hook fluttering along the bottom. Special river floats have a long wire stem to add stability, allowing you to slow the speed of the drift without submerging the float."

These special current floats have names like River Master, Turbo Master and Rough Rider, indicating they are intended for fast, heavy flows.

Of course, you don't have to be a steelheader to use floats in currents. Inland trout streams present challenges for the angler in the same way as steelhead tributaries. The bait may be a single salmon egg, kernels of corn, or a garden worm, but the principle of layered current speed remains. For the shallow, fast-flowing brooks, there is even a special float that can be rigged with a "brake." The brake is actually splitshot that drag the bottom, slowing the drift without interfering with the bait.

Stream smallmouth anglers should be quick to realize the potential for using quality floats designed for current to drift hellgrammites or crayfish just off the bottom through flowing pools and eddies.

"Floats work with any length rod, whether it is 5 feet or 13 feet," says Thill. "But the problem with using a typical 6-foot rod is that you can only use a fixed float set no deeper than 6 feet. The depth setting of a fixed float is restricted to the length of your rod. Of course, you can use slip floats on short rods with greater depth settings, but a fixed float is more sensitive than a slip float. Therefore, I favor long rods and believe the best all-around rod length is 12 feet."

Float fishing certainly is not limited to smaller panfish and gamefish species. There are big fish floats that are balanced with 1/2-ounce to 1 1/2-ounce weights. These have been used for pike, muskies and even lake trout. High-tech floats are opening doors for Pennsylvania anglers to be more successful at catfish and carp fishing, too. According to Mick Thill, no fish is too small or too big, too shallow or too deep to be reached by a float technique.

Perhaps, as some angling prophets are saying, we are entering a new age of sophisticated baitfishing. If that is the case, European-style floats are certainly leading the way.

For More Information

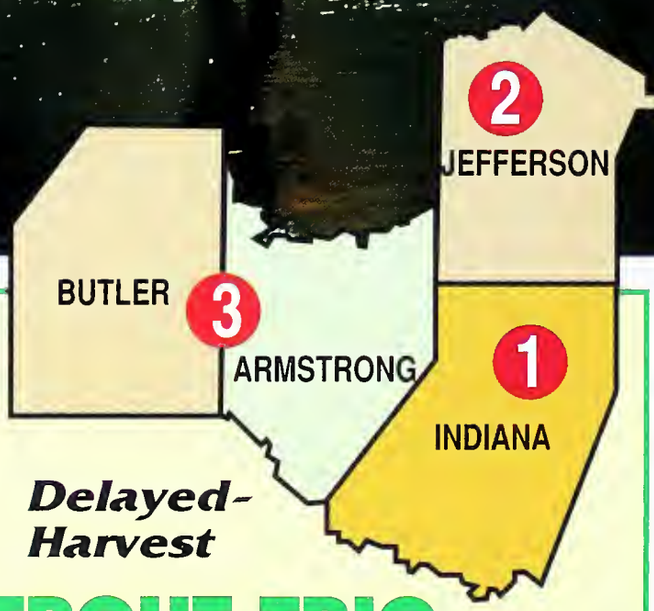
For more information on European-style floats, contact bait and tackle stores in your area, or write or call:

- Lindy-Thill Tackle, Box C, 1110 Wright Street, Brainerd, MN 56401; phone: 218-829-5426.
- Class Floats, c/o R.J. Tackle, 5719 Corporation Circle, Unit 1, Ft. Myers, FL 33905; phone: 813-693-7070.
- Bass Pro Shops, 1935 S. Campbell, Springfield, MO 65898-0123; phone: 417-881-3567.
- Cabela's, 812-13th Avenue, Sidney, NE 69160; phone: 800-237-4444.

Delayed-Harvest TROUT TRIO

by Jeff Knapp





1. Little Mahoning Creek, 4.1 miles, near Rochester Mills, Indiana County, delayed harvest, fly fishing only (1994 *Summary* pp. 17-18).
2. North Fork of Red Bank Creek, 1.9 miles, near Brookville, Jefferson County, delayed harvest, fly fishing only (1994 *Summary* pp. 17-18).
3. Buffalo Creek, 3.7 miles, near Worthington, Armstrong and Butler counties, delayed harvest, artificial lures only (1994 *Summary* page 22).

More and more, Pennsylvania anglers are learning to appreciate special regulations areas. Such projects emphasize conservation and in many cases provide much longer periods of recreation, adding to the angling opportunities a person has to choose.

Specialty programs managed by the Fish and Boat Commission are many and varied, but none is as numerous and widespread as the delayed-harvest trout programs. A quick count of the waters listed in the *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* shows 46 such projects, 17 of the fly-fishing-only variety and 29 artificials only.

Fishing on delayed-harvest areas is permitted year-round. No trout can be creeled from March 1 through June 14. From June 15 until the end of February, a harvest of three trout, nine-inch minimum size, is permitted.

Much of my angling is done near my western Pennsylvania home in Indiana County. It's an area that still suffers from a legacy of strip mines and punch-hole mines, and a mentality that lacked any environmental conscience. Though these deeds of decades past continue to affect water quality, the situation is improving. Still, decent trout habitat is strongly appreciated, and anglers take full advantage of the added opportunities provided by the delayed-harvest projects located in the region.

photo-Jeff Knapp

What follows is a focus on three of these projects, located on Little Mahoning Creek, North Fork of Red Bank Creek and Buffalo Creek. All are part of the Allegheny River drainage, and their waters enter the river in its Armstrong County section.

When compared to freestoners in other areas of the state, these streams might fail to impress. But everything is relative, and the sport provided by these waters, and others like them, is important to the thousands of anglers who live within a reasonable driving distance of them. Simply stated, they give anglers significant opportunity to fish over trout in a natural setting, an important element in the overall Pennsylvania fishing equation.

Little Mahoning Creek

Indiana County is home to Little Mahoning's delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only project that stretches over four miles, from the S.R. 1034 bridge in Rochester Mills upstream to Cesna Run (also called North Branch). This special regs area was around before the Commission's delayed-harvest program, then simply a fly-fishing-only project.

The Fish and Boat Commission stocks catchable-size trout in Little Mahoning Creek from as far upstream as the Nashville area downstream to the McCormick area.

Woody Banks has spent much time fishing Little Mo's delayed-harvest area. As the proprietor of the Indiana Angler Fly Shop, and a member of the Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited, a group active in protecting and enhancing the Little Mahoning watershed, Banks is quite familiar with this project's fishery.

"It's a mountain-type stream, with a good riffle/pool configuration," says Banks. "It probably averages about 30 feet wide at the fly project, with an average depth of a foot or two in the springtime. It's in a forested, country-like setting. If it weren't for the coal trucks driving by on the road, you could be off in the mountains somewhere."

Access to this special project area is good, as S.R. 1038 parallels the north bank of the creek. In spots the stream winds away from the road a bit, giving anglers looking for a sense of seclusion the chance to fish away from the crowds.

Stream improvement devices, placed by the Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited, increase the stream's flow velocity and help stabilize the bank in some areas. The chapter has also created "wintering holes," off-channel, spring-fed holes that create the needed habitat to allow trout to carry over from one season to the next.

Water quality in Little Mahoning is good, though the stream suffers from some acid mine drainage problems. Siltation, caused by farming and strip mining, presents perhaps the biggest problem to the watershed, and limits aquatic life. Still, some hatches do occur.

Early in the season, Banks says there's a little black stonefly, about a size 16, that hatches if the water conditions are correct. If this hatch occurs, it's between mid-April to late April.

"The first big May hatch is the sulphur," says Banks. "Later in the month you get the green drake. I like to imitate my mayflies with a fly called a Comparadun. It's a style of tying. I use Comparadun's in a variety of colors to imitate mayflies found on the stream. Say the Sulphurs are hatching. I use a Comparadun in a size 16 with the appropriately colored body.

"In June, there's a cranefly that hatches. It looks like a giant mosquito. It's not a blanket-type hatch, but when the craneflies mate, it gets the trout feeding on the surface."



For surface-feeding trout taking the cranefly, Banks uses a fly called the Neversink Skater, a variant, all-hackle type of fly. For sub-surface feeding, he uses a larval pattern fashioned by tying cream-colored Honey Bug chenille on a long-shank hook.

In addition to the dry flies mentioned, Banks says many trout are taken on nymphs and wet flies.

"Any all-purpose nymph in the appropriate size will work there. I like a size 14 or 16 Hare's Ear Nymph. They seem to produce throughout the spring. Wet flies are also good early in the spring. I like the Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear and the Leadwing Coachman. They're my two favorites."

According to Banks, streamers, too, are effective and selection is quite simple.

"As far as I'm concerned, if you go up there with a black Woolly Bugger and a chartreuse Woolly Bugger, that's about all the streamers you're going to need. If you want to get more realistic, a Black-Nosed Dace works well, too."

Thanks in a large part to the stream improvement work done by the Ken Sink TU Chapter, in cooperation with the Fish and Boat Commission, Little Mahoning's fly project is more of a 12-month trout fishery, capable of providing the needed habitat to hold trout for more than a couple of months in the spring.

Says Banks, "I think you can fish over trout there year-round. In times of extremely low water and high water temperatures, though, the trout will be stressed."

North Fork (of Red Bank Creek)

This delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only area was formerly a fish-for-fun (fly-fishing-only) area. The project water lies upstream of the Jefferson County community of Brookville, comprising a 1.9-mile stretch upstream from the Route 322 bridge.

The Fish and Boat Commission stocks brook and brown trout in the North Fork for a distance of 12 miles upstream of Brookville. In Brookville, the North Fork joins Sandy Lick Creek to form Red Bank Creek.

Even though the North Fork's waters have escaped the ills of acid mine drainage, it has been negatively affected by acid rain. Its water temperatures become marginal after June.

Like Little Mahoning Creek, the North Fork has erratic insect hatches. But according to Ron Kolman, who fishes this project often from spring through early summer, there's enough insect activity to keep things interesting. Mayfly hatches follow the natural order, but not always in significant numbers.

Delayed-Harvest TROUT TRIO

"Starting early in the season you have your quill gordons, hendricksons and march browns. In May you get the gray fox. Those flies are present, but not always in great numbers. They are sporadic," says Kolman.

As May continues, Kolman has found that bug life becomes more abundant.

"What I have found to be more prolific are the sulphurs and light cahills. Those tend to be more abundant. About that same time there's a hatch of little green stoneflies. It's really thick there. Sometimes they are reluctant to take it, but at other times they go crazy over it."

Kolman says his best general imitation for general fishing has been an Adams in sizes 16 and 18. The light cahills are sizes 14 and 16, and sulphurs, size 16. The little green stoneflies are size 16.

Ron also fishes plenty of sub-surface flies, especially when water conditions aren't conducive to mayfly hatches. He also notes that the abundance of stocked brook trout calls for something other than surface flies. He prefers Woolly Buggers and marabou streamers. Dark-colored streamers tend to work better earlier in the season, until about early May. Then, for reasons he can't explain, lighter colors become more productive.

Conditions play a major part in any fishing situation, and Kolman says this is certainly true on the Red Bank project. Within this nearly two-mile stretch is a low-head dam that creates a pool of water for Brookville's water supply. He says the prime temperature for good fishing is around 58 degrees, and that the dam can influence temperatures somewhat.

"That stretch of flat water, because of the dam, can really get cooking if the water's low and there's little current. If the water's moving, the temperature stays relatively low."

You can get to the delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only stretch on the North Fork by a road that leads off of Route 322 in Brookville to the Water Works and Dick Park (a community park). There's a large parking area there, and much of the fishing pressure is concentrated near this lot. Kolman says that the water above the dam is very productive, but receives far less pressure because it's harder to reach.

He adds that the water below the swinging bridge, which is downstream of the parking lot, is also excellent.

"I like that section of water, because it's also less populated."

Buffalo Creek

This is a new delayed-harvest area. In the early 1990s the Fish and Boat Commission dubbed a 3.7-mile stretch of Buffalo Creek, which flows from Butler into Armstrong County, a delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only area. Both the Arrowhead Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Ford City-based) and the Buffalo Valley Sportsmen's Club were driving forces behind the designation of this special project.

The exact location of the area is from Little Buffalo Run downstream to 0.6 mile above S.R. 4035 in Craigsville. This water is located just upstream of Worthington, which is located on Route 422.

Ken Wenzel is the president of the Arrowhead Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and a highly skilled fly-fisher who fishes a wide variety of waters, the Buffalo Creek project included. According to Wenzel, insect life in the stream is marginal at best.

"There's not a lot of activity. There are some black midges and maybe some cream midges. There's a mayfly here and there, and a few caddis flies, but nothing to the amount of what happens even on Little Mahoning. But the fish eat what's there. Anything that goes by gets eaten."

Early in the season, Wenzel's strategy is to use patterns such as Glo Bugs, Green Weenies, Sucker Spawns and streamers.

"Brightly colored streamers work well over there, like chartreuse, orange and white, and Woolly Buggers," says Wenzel. "Brown works about the best of all the Woolly Buggers, I think because it looks like a crawfish."

In May, as the water warms, Wenzel's choices go to caddis pupae and soft-hackled caddis imitations fished sub-surface.

Dry fly fishing, according to Wenzel, doesn't exist until late May or early June, and then it's a matter of using terrestrial imitations.

"They'll take ants, inch worms, and beetles well. They don't go for hopper imitations, at least not that I'm aware of," he says. In that the Buffalo Creek project is of the artificials-only variety, anglers aren't limited to fishing only with flies. Mark Transue, a West Kittanning tackle shop owner, says most hardware anglers opt for spinners.

According to Transue, the top spinner presentation on Buffalo Creek is the C.P. Swing with a silver body and gold blade. He says they work in size 3 and smaller. Rooster Tails in white or chartreuse are also effective spinners there.

The Arrowhead Chapter is actively working to enhance the conditions of this area by building stream improvement devices and bank stabilization devices.

Before venturing out on these or any of the state's specially-regulated trout waters, be sure to consult the appropriate regulations outlined in your *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws.*

Regulation Changes

The Fish and Boat Commission is presently considering changes that would affect several special regulations trout programs, the delayed-harvest areas included.

Under present regulations, the "no-kill" period runs from March until June 14. Trout may then be harvested from this mid-June date until the end of February the following year.

The proposal now considered is to establish the "harvest period" as June 15 through Labor Day. The no-harvest period would follow, ending the following June 14.

The plan is to include stockings of catchable-size trout during the fall, adding to the recreation provided by delayed-harvest areas. Such fall stockings would be part of a stream's annual allocation. These trout would not be a bonus, or additional, allocation.

Input for the proposed changes came, in part, from the statewide telephone trout angler survey as well as surveys of the agency's fisheries and law enforcement personnel. With approval of the Commission, these changes will go into effect in January of 1995.–*JK.*

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Bluegill Experts

I have been in exactly one declared fishing contest in my life and it involved catching bluegills on flies. I got into it by accident because I have enough trouble competing with the fish without other fishermen involved–but there I was, and with a guide, no less. He took me to a bluegill spawning area, and I could see the big bluegills down there over their nests.

Hoping he could learn something from me, I put on a little sponge-rubber spider, cast it where I knew there were bluegills and twitched it gently. I did that several times and finally caught a fish. When I had explained my technique, the guide courteously inquired if I would like to catch maybe 35 bluegills with 40 casts, and thinking he might be about to introduce live worms, I was only mildly agreeable. But I said I'd try his method, and he passed me a little dark-green nymph with a sliver of a white tail. It was slightly weighted. He said he'd tied it for years and had no trouble catching bluegills with it.

He said to cast it in the right place, let it sink and count slowly until a bluegill grabbed it. I did that and he said to remember my count and try again. If a fish didn't take immediately, he said, I should twitch the thing a little.

After I had caught 30-some bluegills and the guide had recorded them in his fishing contest record, I concluded that although bluegills are not great thinkers, they can require a little special technique from time to time. Even a rubber spider or a tiny popping bug is not necessarily effective every day.

I'd guess that more than half the bluegills caught in America are thrown high into the air with rods or poles strong enough to hoist a legal limit of them. I have found, however, that a bluegill on a 4-weight fly rod feels much the same as a rainbow trout of the same weight and you can eat him without disappointment. Some of the methods used in catching a bluegill are duplicates of those used on trout, even though no Latin is mentioned and the flies need not have colorful names.

Now and then there is a triumph of method that makes us cruder fishermen feel like technical experts. There was the time I saw the bluegills feeding in a shallow, miniature cove just off a big river. They were prowling around their puddle with their dorsal fins out, obviously grabbing up some tiny thing I couldn't make out. So I took off my bass bug and told myself that hungry bluegills will take almost anything if it is at the right depth. I put on a small wet fly, flipped it among the busy fish and prepared to handle the little fellows gently on my bass rod. They wouldn't touch it, although they continued to charge around the pool with their fins showing from time to time.

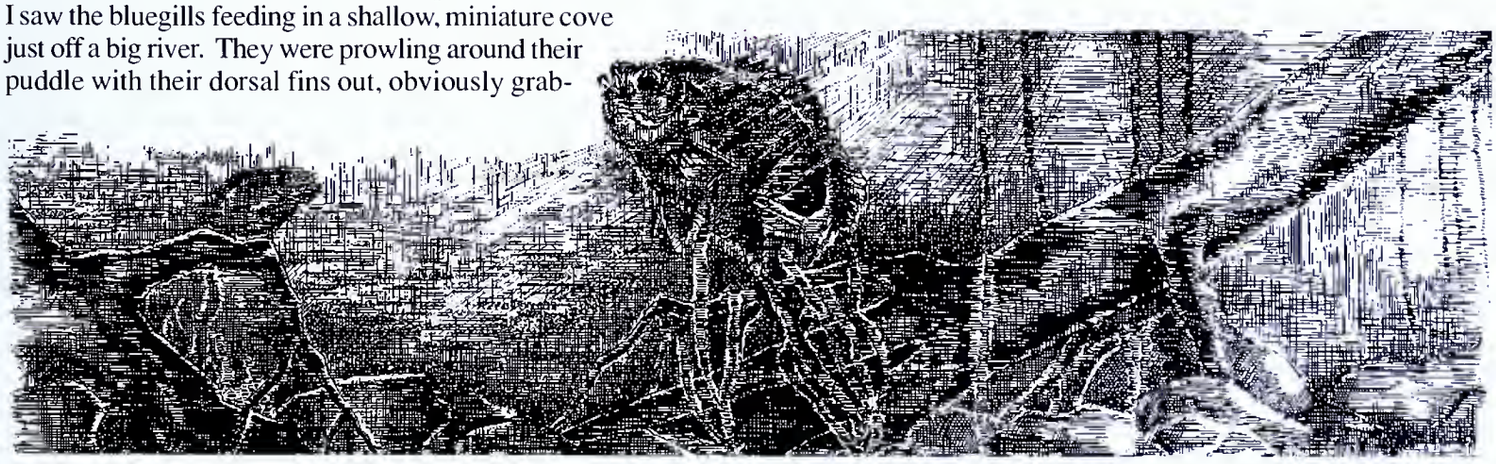
Not one of the fish had showed any interest in anything on the surface, but out of bemused curiosity I put on a good-sized dry fly. Bass fishing hadn't been any good, anyway. I do not think I caught all of the fish in the little pool, one of them seeming to head back toward the main river when he found he was alone. I'd been releasing my catches a few yards away and they hadn't returned to their puddle to pass the word.

A bluegill expert receives only modest fame, and when he makes a boo-boo it isn't noticed much. Years ago when a southern fisheries biologist endeavored to start an outsized strain of bluegills and discovered his aquarium collection contained only males (they tend to be bigger), there was no public outcry and he retained his job.

At one time my wife, Debie, got on a bluegill kick, because she had them located near some bass that sometimes didn't cooperate. She had a johnboat stashed at a little fishing resort near there and could make short trips from home. As a sort of family duty she would invite me along when the bass fishing looked good, and once when there wasn't much bass fishing, she took me for bluegills. She said the bluegills weren't doing much on top and that we should use some little nymphs, strikingly similar to the one the guide had tutored me on years before. After Debie had caught half a dozen bluegills and I'd caught nothing, I asked what I was doing wrong.

"What's your count?" Debie asked.

That sounded familiar. It was the same old business the wiseguy guide had pulled on me.



Sunny Days

by Rhume Streeter

Fishing for members of the sunfish family, the genus Lepomis, mandates two things. Think small and think early summer. "Think small" refers to the choice of rods, lines, leaders, bobbers, lures and baits. What the sunfish lack in physical size, they more than make up in fighting qualities and in bigness in taste.

In early summer, when water temperatures in the Keystone State rise to the 70-degree mark, sunfish are stimulated to reproduce their species. The males move into shallow water, preferably with a sand and gravel bottom. There they fan out a hollow depression with their fins and tail. When it's complete, they entice as many females into the area as they can. After each female spews out her eggs, the male fertilizes them. These mates are quickly shooed out and another female, ripe with eggs, is coaxed in. Possibly three or four females may contribute to one nest each year.

Because of this communal nesting, there may be as many as 15,000 eggs in one nest. Depending on the water temperatures, the eggs, which the male guards constantly, hatch in three to 10 days.

The best nesting sites are occupied by the biggest and strongest sunfish. The shallower near-shore sites are not always best. There, predation of the eggs by hordes of smaller fishes, by many shore birds, and by reptiles and amphibians is rampant. So the bigger, fatter sunnies spawn in water that offers suitable bottom as well as depth, like depths in the 3- to 5-foot range.

Sunnies strike now because they are hungry or they are protecting their nests. Don't feel too badly about taking these fish off the spawning beds. The tremendous amounts of sunfish eggs that are produced in a body of water, and the ability of the fish to repopulate quickly, make heavy use of the fish a necessity. Too often, lakes and ponds become unbalanced with mediocre-sized runts. Stunted growth can be caused by failure to harvest enough smaller fish, while overcropping the predators that control balanced populations.

Because sunfish are basically consumers of tiny aquatic organisms, even as small as daphnia (water fleas), make sure your hook sizes conform to their taste. Size 10 in bait hooks and even smaller sizes on lures are best. Fly sizes can get up to an 8 at most.

Use ultralight spinning outfits for sunfish. Line strength, either 2- or 3-pound test, is sufficient. If you're using some of the new super-thin monofilaments that have fine diameters, you can probably get away with 4-pound test. Bobber size can be critical, so use a bobber just big enough to be visible while fishing, yet be able to keep the bait suspended just above the bottom.

Bait

Fishing with bait from a boat, use two rods and drift with the wind. Try to go as slowly as possible. Mealworms, small garden worms and a much overlooked bait, crickets, are ideal. Because of the shallowness, suspend your baits below a float or bobber. Cover as much territory as you can on each float. Then when you catch fish, retrace that same path again and again until the fish stop hitting. Use different baits on each rod, until you determine what the fish want. On days with no wind or too much wind, you have to rely on rowing or using an electric motor for lengthy drifts.

Fishing with bait from shore with ultralight outfits calls for the use of bobbers, too. The techniques require casting toward cover, if it is in range, and allowing the bait to sit for a short time before moving it. Sunnies have a habit of darting off when something plops into the water near them. From a safe distance they watch the bait, then ease up closer for a better look. Only then, if it looks good, will they gently suck it in. If the bait is right, hook size is suitable, and bobber resistance is minimal, you'll catch fish.

On each cast, don't hurry to move the bait. Wait a few minutes before each crank. When you move the bait, do it slowly and move it only a few feet. After you have caught a couple of fish from one location, you may notice that they are more reluctant to bite. Either change the bait or move. And because you have caught a few fish on one bait, move only 15 or 20 steps along the shore and get into a new bunch of fish.

Lures

For lures on the ultralight outfit, either from shore or from a boat, try the tiny bladed spinners that have the treble hook covered in feathers resembling a tiny fly. They're made as small as 1/32-ounce and work wonders on 2-pound-test line. Blades on these spinners come in every imaginable color, but black seems to work best. Feather colors are more effective in contrasting hues. White, yellow and red are all good. Small jigs, those whose tails stretch to 1 1/2 inches, also take fish. Try a variety of colors until you offer them one they like.

Fly rods

Sunnies are a perfect companion for a limber-action 7-foot rod. Leaders should be tapered to 2-pound test or less. With this rig there is a large variety of lures to use. Dry flies, those that ride high on the water and can be readily seen by the angler on glassy water, are great. Don't hurry to move the fly once it has landed. There are some respectable hatches coming off the waters, and many of the emerging insects rest on the water before taking off.

Sunnies gorge themselves during a major hatch. Brown-and-white bivisibles and the black-and-white versions top the list of effective patterns.

Those tiny poppers with cork or plastic bodies and wisps of feathers that resemble insect legs, do a good job in teasing fish to bite. The bumblebee pattern is great for this lure. Bugs tied with deer hair in brown and black do well when the fish are feeding sluggishly.

Fishing wet flies with the spinning outfit makes it necessary to use a small bobber for casting weight, and to keep the flies suspended. Fishing more than one fly at a time is difficult because of the many snarls and twists that develop in casting. Use wet flies that are fur-bodied and fuzzy, with a gold or silver rib and hackle that is limp and pulsating. If you tie your own flies, wrap in fine copper wire for weight. This gets the lures to sink into waters where the fish are holding. After casting, watch the bobber for slight dips or stops and strike immediately. Be sure that the clutch of the reel is set for this very light line. If not, you'll tear off every time.

Fly rodders do nicely with tandem or even three flies when seeking feeding sunfish. The leader length need not be excessive. Six feet is plenty. Use floating fly line and dress it well to keep it buoyant. Watch where the leader is connected to the line on each cast for telltale stops or twitches as you slowly retrieve the flies. Strike softly because light tippets snap easily.

Where do you fish for these miniature battlers? There are few waterways in the Keystone State that don't have one, two or even three of the five varieties of Lepomis that are found in Pennsylvania. Bluegills are the most preferred and get most of the fishing pressure. Pumpkinseed sunfish can also grow large. The other sunfishes are either not as prevalent, or they don't attain a size we're looking for.

Where to fish

Because most American anglers have been brainwashed into fishing only for hawgs, slabs or lunkers, "lowly" sunnies have been bypassed. Any of our big waters–Wallenpaupak, Raystown, Kinzua, Pymatuning, Presque Isle Bay, Keystone Reservoir, Glendale Lake, Shenango Reservoir, Blue Marsh Lake, Conowingo Dam, Youghiogheny Reservoir and hundreds more of our smaller lakes, dams and ponds–have ample numbers of sunfish just waiting to be caught. Early morning and late evening have always been the favored time for panfishing, but any time of day you can get out could be just as rewarding.

One other area needs to be addressed in the quest for good panfishing. These are numerous farm ponds across the Commonwealth. Most of these have plentiful populations of sunfish, but because of the reluctance of landowners to allow groups of fishermen on their property, they remain out of bounds. If you are privileged with permission to fish a farm pond, bear in mind several ideas: Keep your visits minimal, limit your catches, make sure the area is as clean or cleaner when you leave as it was when you arrived, and make sure the landowner benefits with several meal-sized bunches of fillets.

Take a measuring stick along with you. Sunfish should be at least 8 inches long for easy filleting and great eating. Figure that each member of your family will eat fillets from two or three fish and adjust your take-home catch accordingly. Remember to take only what you know you'll use. Good panfishing! Pennsylvania ANGLER



photo-Doug Stamm

The Driftwood Branch

by Robert L. Petri



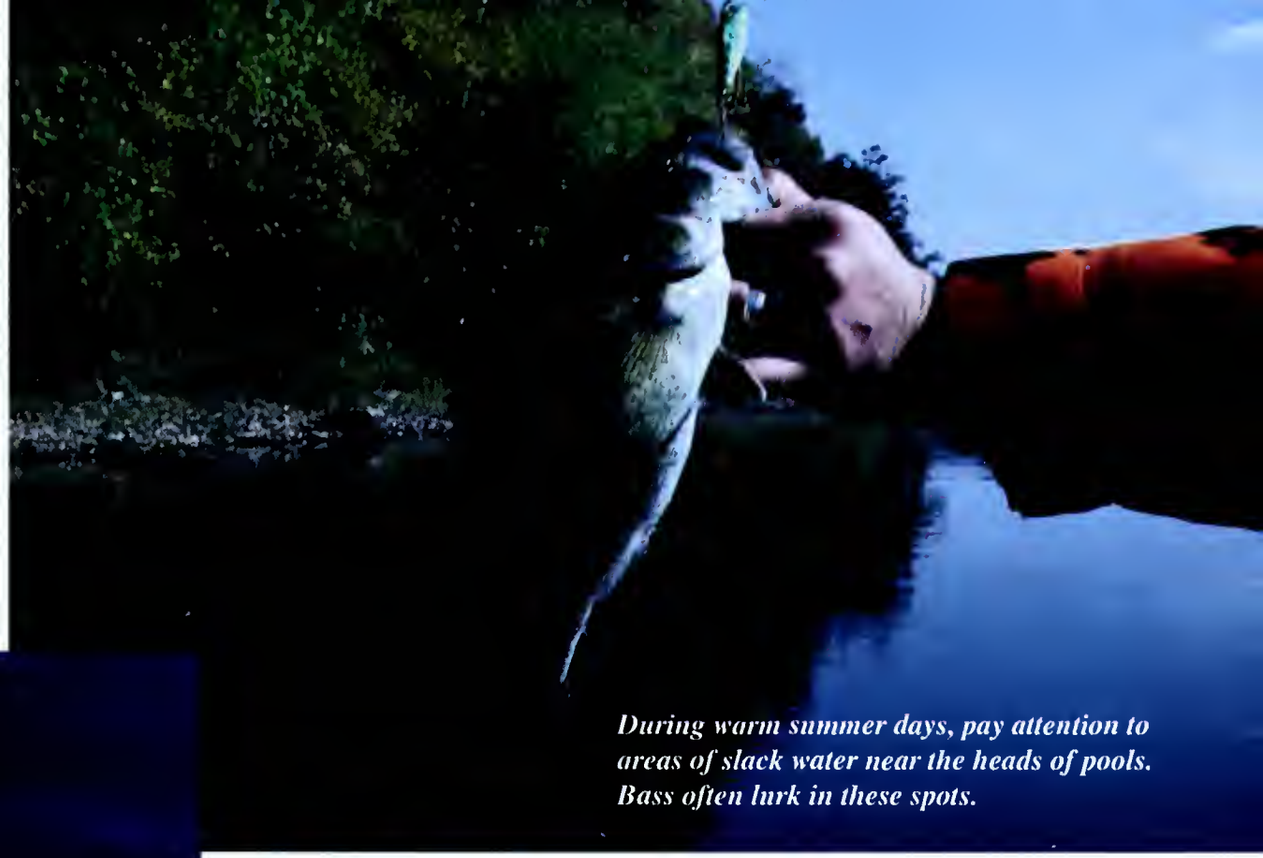


photo-Jeff Knapp

During warm summer days, pay attention to areas of slack water near the heads of pools. Bass often lurk in these spots.

Daybreak.

A thick curtain of morning fog drapes the runs and pools of the big mountain stream as it rolls down the valley. I wade into the shallows, watching the rocky pockets along the opposite bank, rod at the ready.

In the lee of a huge boulder along the far bank, a hail of minnows explodes from the water, fleeing for their lives. Close behind them is the wake of a good fish in hot pursuit. I backcast, and shoot the small, white popper into the commotion. I jiggle the popper once, and the wake engulfs it in a silent swirl. Fifteen inches of enraged smallmouth vaults from the water again and again, the popper planted firmly in its jaw. I finally bring the fish to hand. While I have won the contest, there is no compromise to be found in the fiery red eyes of the bass as I release him back into the flow. The scene is repeated a dozen times before the sun burns the fog from the water. Time to move on.

High afternoon sun. Some 20 miles upstream, the river is a mountain brook, falling cold and clear from rock to rock, and gliding through a patchwork valley of meadows and woodlots. I flip the small spinner in tight to a deep undercut bank. There is a sharp tug, and a flash of olive and orange as a small wild brook trout tries to burrow back under the bank. He is quickly landed and released. In the next pocket, a 12-inch brown stops the spinner dead. It's going to be a good afternoon.

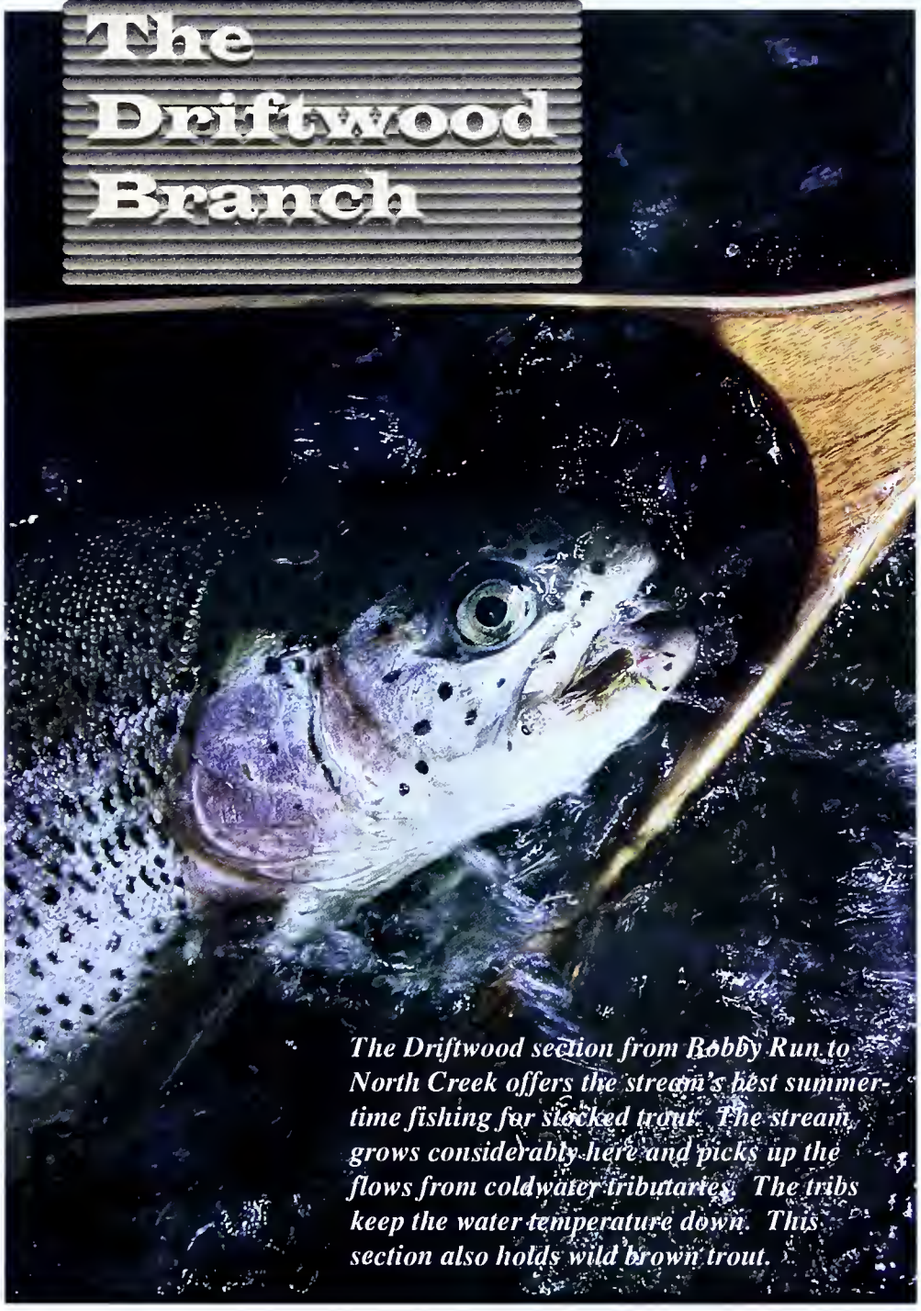
Different settings, different fish, all on the same northcentral Pennsylvania waterway–the Driftwood Branch of Sinnemahoning Creek in Cameron County. Over the stream's 30-mile-plus length, there is enough variety and spectacular scenery to satisfy almost any angler. Let's explore the changing faces of this fishery from source to mouth.

The Driftwood Branch begins in a remote corner of northeast Elk County, where a couple of small rivulets tumble off the sides of the steep, wooded ridges and join their flows. The newborn stream flows south and east through a heavily forested valley for about seven miles before emerging from the woods near the village of Elk Valley. Here the Elk Fork joins the Driftwood Branch, almost doubling the size of the stream.

In past years, the Driftwood above Elk Fork was stocked preseason with brook trout. Today, because of a significant wild trout population and some access problems, this section no longer receives hatchery fish. Although the land along this section has been leased by a private hunting club, they have graciously continued to allow angler access to most of this portion of the upper

photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

The Driftwood Branch



The Driftwood section from Bobby Run to North Creek offers the stream's best summertime fishing for stocked trout. The stream grows considerably here and picks up the flows from coldwater tributaries. The tribs keep the water temperature down. This section also holds wild brown trout.

Driftwood. Please help keep it this way by being a courteous angler who does not litter or otherwise abuse the natural beauty of the area.

Brook trout dominate these upper reaches of the Driftwood Branch. Browns become more numerous as you continue downstream toward the Elk Fork. The heat of summer drives a considerable number of the stocked trout from downstream areas up into these cooler waters. Attractor-type dry flies like Humpies and the Adams work well on the trout of the Driftwood headwaters. So do small spinners worked along undercut banks and log jams. Whatever your preferred angling method, please remember the slender thread of good will that allows access to this section of the stream. Respect the property owner.

Commission stocking of the Driftwood Branch begins at the stream's confluence with Bobby Run, about three miles downstream from Elk Valley. From this point downstream for four miles to the junction with North Creek and Route 46, the Driftwood Branch is paralleled by LR 4004 (Rich Valley Road), and access is generally good at the several bridge crossings and other points where the stream comes near the road.

The Bobby Run to North Creek section of the Driftwood offers the stream's best summertime angling over stocked trout. The stream grows considerably here as it picks up the flows of tributaries like Clear Creek, Cooks Run and North Creek. These coldwater tribs help keep summer water temperatures down and also allow for some significant holdover of stocked trout. There is also a fair wild brown trout population in this portion of the Driftwood.

From Bobby Run downstream to Route 46, the Driftwood features a number of long, deep pools and heavy runs as it flows through an easy, open valley. Even though hot summer afternoons sometimes drive the water temperatures here into the low 70s, there is still reasonably good trout fishing through this section even into the dog days of July and August.

This stretch of the Driftwood Branch yields some truly huge browns each summer to anglers who know where to fish. Look for deeper pools with significant in-stream cover like boulders and downed trees. Also pay attention to stretches immediately below the influx of small, cold tributaries. In the hottest weather, the trout queue up in these areas to seek relief from rising water temperatures.

The grassy banks and overhanging canopy of trees along the stream's edge are the cue for the fly angler to probe the water with terrestrial imitations such as deer hair ants, beetles and grasshoppers. The spin fisherman can score in clear water with small spinners in muted colors like black or bronze. In the rising water that follows a gusty summer thunderstorm, a gold- or silver-bladed spinner is a better choice. Using a direct upstream cast, fish your lure in close to pockets of deeper water, and beside rocks and logs in the stream.

Bait anglers can also take advantage of the higher flows following summer downpours by drifting a worm or small crayfish through the deeper pools. Large trout often lose some of their usual caution when the water rises and becomes discolored. Some of the largest browns the Driftwood has surrendered have been taken during periods when these conditions prevail.

With the addition of the considerable flow of North Creek, the Driftwood Branch downstream from Route 46 undergoes another transformation into a large freestone stream. Just below the North Creek confluence, a 1.4-mile delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only section begins immediately behind the Shippen Township building, and continues along Route 46 almost to the Route 120 bridge just west of Emporium.

The springtime explosion of hatches and rising trout on these project waters is truly something to see. But during the dry and hot days of July, most of the hatches finish for another year, and angling is somewhat more difficult. However, fairly good numbers of trout continue to inhabit the special reg area throughout the summer, and they can be taken if you are willing to expend the time to search them out.

The project contains several long, flat pools where browns sip midges on the cooler summer mornings. Small tan or cream midges in sizes 20 to 24 and size 18 Pheasant Tail nymphs fished in the surface film produce at these times. The long pool di-

photo-Doug Stamm

rectly behind the Cameron County fairgrounds is an excellent place to try these tactics. There is even a comfortable bench placed streamside here by the Emporium-based James Zwald Chapter of Trout Unlimited, where you can rest your feet, take in the scenery and ponder your next move if the fishing is slow.

Rainbows are also part of the stocked trout mix in the Driftwood project. Look for them in the faster, broken water sections of the stream, where the oxygen content of the water is at its peak. Isonychia nymphs in size 14 or a Hare's Ear in sizes 12 through 16 often move these fish out of their broken-water lies behind the numerous rocks that litter the stream bottom.



photo-Jeff Knapp

As the Driftwood Branch swings south and east past the city of Emporium, it is reborn with the addition of the considerable flows of West Creek and Portage Creek. As it leaves the last traces of Emporium behind, the stream could just as easily be called a river. For the next 18 miles, the Driftwood glides along Route 120 through one of Pennsylvania's most beautiful mountain valleys. One-hundred-foot-wide flats and pools alternate with long sparkling riffles as the stream hurries toward its rendezvous with the Bennett Branch at the village of Driftwood.

This big-water section of the Driftwood is trout water, too, and is heavily stocked during April and May with browns and rainbows. However, the trout fishery here is limited by high summer water temperatures. As summer settles in, trout action gives way to fine angling for the real stars of the lower Driftwood fishery–smallmouth bass. The lower Driftwood, from Emporium to Driftwood, is rated by Commission Area 3 Fisheries Manager Bruce Hollender as one of the best stream smallmouth fisheries in his region. That's high praise when you consider that Bruce's area includes such excellent smallmouth waters as the lower portions of Pine and Loyalsock creeks, among others.

The Driftwood bass inhabit almost every type of habitat that the stream offers as it travels past the towering ridges of Cameron County. However, the fish have their definite preferences. Foremost among these are long, boulder-studded flats so common to the Driftwood. I call these places "bass hotels." The typical Driftwood flat has a slow to moderate flow with water depths in the two- to four-foot range. It is important that the water be perceptibly moving, but not so fast that it makes it difficult for the bass to hold in the current. There is a generous helping of boulders scattered throughout, where the fish can hold out of the main current waiting for food to drift by.

Rocky stream banks, especially when they are near deeper water, are the next most productive areas to take Driftwood bass. Once again, you should key your efforts on those banks where flow rate is moderate. Pass by banks where there are no rocks or other cover. Smallmouth bass are among the most cover-oriented fish, and they seldom hold in these areas.

On the warmer days of summer, pay particular attention to areas of slack water near the heads of pools. The bass often lay in these areas to take advantage of the higher oxygen content generated by the riffled water above. Almost all areas of this kind have a "break line" where the riffles cease, the water slows, and the pool begins. This is usually where the bass can be found.

One of the best attributes of all stream smallmouths, including those in the Driftwood Branch, is their tendency to be "equal-opportunity feeders." There is no single kind of tackle or technique that works best all the time. Whether you are a bait angler, a spin fisherman or a dyed-in-the-wool fly-fishing devotee, the key to success is to concentrate on the types of water I describe, and choose your lure, fly or bait with the natural feeding routines of the bass in mind.

Even though it is true that the Driftwood bass eat anything that looks like food and isn't likely to bite back, the fish have their preferences that are largely based on the natural food sources available to them in the stream. Stream smallmouth seem to relish crayfish above all other sources of food, followed by minnows or other fish and the larvae or adults of aquatic insects. The Driftwood Branch has ample supplies of all these sources of forage.

The bait angler hoping to connect with a Driftwood bass should drift a softshell crayfish below a few small splitshot along rocky banks and through areas where the current is broken by boulders and log jams. When you can find them, use smaller crayfish in the 1 1/2-inch to 2 1/2-inch size. On the drift, keep in contact with your bait by keeping the slack out of your line. When you feel the pick-up of a fish, wait a second or two and then strike. This lets the bass get enough of the crayfish in his mouth to ensure good hooking success.

Live minnows, nightcrawlers and hellgrammites fished in the same manner are all very effective on Driftwood bass. Be careful with hellgrammites. They have a pair of nasty pincers on their front end, and you may end up being the one who gets hooked.

As a youngster, I cut my fishing teeth on stream bass taken with small lures on light spinning tackle. This is still an effective way to take flowing-water smallmouths, and those in the Driftwood Branch are no exception. Even though spinners and

jigs take fair numbers of fish, I've had much better success with small crankbaits like the Rebel crayfish, small Rapalas and Rat-L-Traps. The best colors are those that imitate crayfish or injured minnows.

In most streams like the Driftwood, you want to stay with smaller lures of a quarter-ounce or less. They seem to generate more hits than the larger lures.

In most water conditions you can fish 6- or 8-pound test with relative confidence. However, in very low flows the bass sometimes become as spooky as trout and shy away from the heavier lines. At these times, put on some 4-pound test and make your casts well above your intended target so that the fish are not spooked by the lure's splash. Fly fishing is my favorite way to angle over the bass of the Driftwood Branch. On misty summer mornings and in the cool of evening, nothing can match the thrill of a good bass engulfing a well-placed surface popper or deerhair bug. As with spinning lures, smaller is usually better when it comes to choosing a popper or bug. I have had my best luck with cork poppers in shades of white, yellow or a froggy looking green, in sizes 4 through 8. In low, clear water, sizes as small as 10 or even 12 can sometimes save the day.

Work the popper around sunken rock piles and near any breaks in the current where the bass may be resting. On the retrieve, make your popper act as if it's late for an appointment with a steady, chugging action. However, occasionally let it stop dead in the water for a few seconds. This often causes any bass in the area to lose the ability to think rational fish thoughts and he will strike.

Even though fishing on top with poppers and bugs is the most exciting way to fly fish for Driftwood bass, more fish are actually taken on sub-surface flies. Woolly Buggers, Zonkers and Harry Murray's series of Strymph flies in sizes 4 to 10 are all effective on stream smallmouth. Depending on color and size, these flies can be made to imitate a number of the smallmouth's favorite food forms like minnows, crayfish and leeches. A wise man once said that when it comes to smallmouth flies, any color is fine, as long as it's black. Black is perhaps the best color overall, but don't be caught on the water without some of the flies mentioned above in shades of cream, olive and dark brown as well.

I have had my best success fishing these sub-surface flies on a dead drift through rocky pockets and along deeper stream banks. Bass often inhale these flies rather than take them hard, so pay close attention to your leader and strike at the slightest hesitation. A strike indicator placed a few feet above the fly can greatly increase the number of bass you hook.

A fly rod in the 8 1/2-foot to 9-foot range, balanced for a 6- or 7-weight line is about right for working the Driftwood Branch. Leaders generally need not be long, and in fact, a shorter leader helps you detect more of the gentle underwater takes. A six-foot leader tapered to 2x or 3x is about right for fishing wet. Lengthen out to nine feet and 1x or 2x for poppers and bugs.

Access to the nearly 20 miles of productive bass water on the Driftwood Branch is generally good. There are numerous pull-offs along Route 120 where you can park and walk to the water. Along some portions of the stream, a very busy rail line follows the valley between the highway and the water. To avoid tragic accidents, the railroad has posted no trespassing signs along the tracks. Please pay attention to these notices and do not try to access the stream from these points. There is more than ample access where the railroad runs on the far side of the stream, and at bridge crossings near the villages of Cameron, Sterling Run and Driftwood along Route 120. Please play it safe.

From the spritely trout of its shaded headwaters to the angry smallmouth of its broad sparkling flats, the Driftwood Branch is an angler's feast of delightful variety. You could spend a whole summer learning its secrets, and sampling its trout and bass bounty. If you don't have a whole summer, just a day will do. You'll find it to be time well spent.

Sampling the Tributaries

Although it receives significantly less notice than the more highly publicized streams of Potter and Lycoming counties, Cameron County has excellent small stream trout fishing. In addition to the fine fishing offered by the main stem of the Driftwood Branch, there is excellent trout fishing to be had all summer long in the upper reaches of many of the Driftwood tributaries. Streams such as Clear Creek and North Creek in the upper watershed above Emporium stay cold all summer and hold decent populations of mixed stocked and wild trout. The same can be said for the upper portions of Portage Creek and its main tributary watershed, Cowley Run and its East and West branches.

In the lower Driftwood watershed, a dozen or more small tribs provide good to excellent brook trout fishing. Among the best are Stillhouse and Square Timber runs near Cameron, and some of the more isolated tributaries to Sterling Run near the village of the same name.

Most of these waters flow for at least a portion of their lengths through the publicly owned expanses of Elk State Forest, making the only access problem how far you are willing to hike to get into the better fishing offered by these little gem-like waterways.–*RLP*.

High-Water Surprise

On the lower reaches of the Driftwood Branch and other large, stocked trout waters that become primarily smallmouth bass water as the summer progresses, periods of high water can bring about an interesting change in the nature of the fishery. In the aftermath of a good summer thunderstorm, trout seem to reappear as if by magic in many of their old springtime haunts. These remaining survivors of the spring stockings move from the hidden spring holes in the stream, and out of the lower reaches of the colder tributaries, to take advantage of the smorgasbord of food carried by the high, slightly discolored flow of the main stream.

Look for them in holding lies along the banks and behind rockpiles that held only bass before the storm. In the cloudy water, the trout lose some of their caution, and all the techniques we have suggested for Driftwood smallmouth take them. Indeed, my angling records show about equal numbers of bass and trout taken from the Driftwood during these water conditions.

Don't expect good fishing when the water is licking at the highway guard rails and dislodging small streamside trees. That's a flood, not high water. The best conditions occur when the stream is carrying six inches to a foot of extra water, and is slightly off color.–*RLP*.

Raystown Lake's Coldwater Trophies

by Wes Bower

Beginning in 1973 with the initial impounding of water, Raystown Lake has provided numerous angling adventures. Initially this 8,300-acre waterway was touted for its bass fishing opportunities. During late April, May and early June, panfish action, particularly crappies, became an impoundment highlight.

By 1979, "striper mania" had afflicted Raystown Lake anglers. Striped bass became the impoundment Cinderella fish. Since that time, the state record striper classification has been constantly updated as weights of trophy stripers increased. On August 5, 1993, a new freshwater state record striper weighed in at 50 pounds, 8 ounces. A scale sample of this striped bass showed that the fish was 14 years old and had been stocked in 1979. Stripers were first stocked in 1973.

Muskies have also enjoyed their occasional moments of angling splendor. Before Raystown Lake was created, stocking muskellunge fingerlings had been a continuing project in the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River. After the construction of Raystown Lake, reports of a few trophy fish whetted the appetite of local musky anglers. It was a local media event when during the week of June 18 to June 26, 1982, five trophies in the 30-pound class were brought to boat. Several muskies in the 20-pound-plus class were also reported.

A similar musky happening occurred in the summer of 1993, when during late June and early July, Raystown Lake muskies went on a feeding frenzy. A 46-pound, 53-inch trophy was caught. Three others exceeding 40 pounds and 50 inches were also recorded. In addition to many large purebred muskies, anglers measured, weighed and released several tiger muskies in the 36-inch to 42-inch range.

Raystown Lake has been the site of many nationally recognized bass tournaments. Largemouth trophies in the seven-pound-plus category gained local recognition. Smallmouth bass over six pounds have also been recorded. During this impoundment's early years, largemouth and smallmouth catches were reported equally. Recently, smallmouth bass have been taken more regularly.

Denizens of the deep

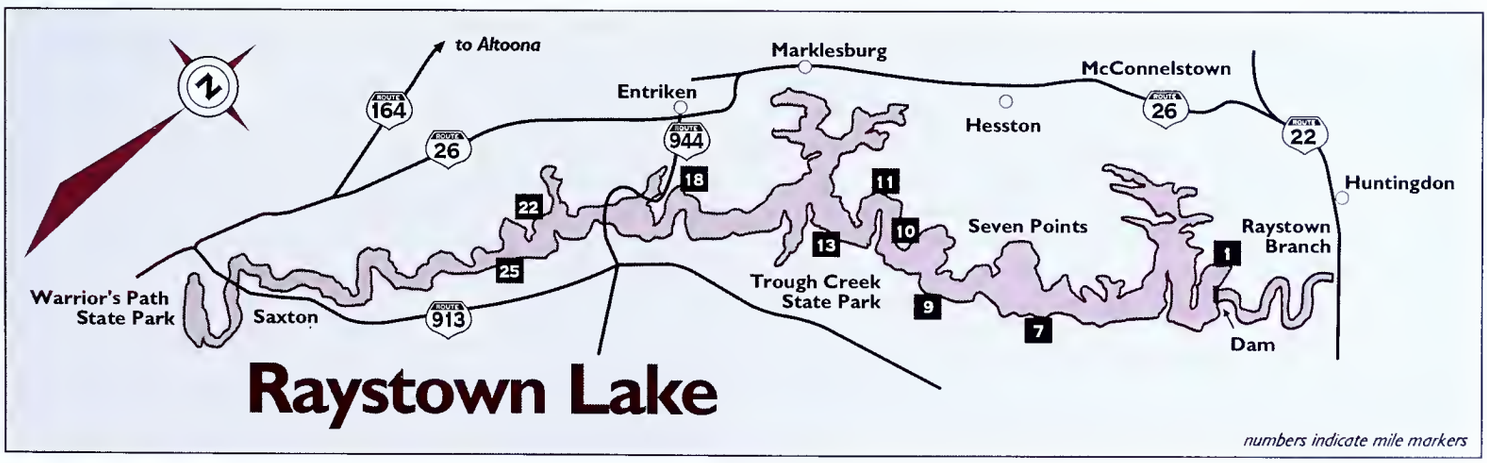
With all these fish species available, few anglers expected more surprises from the depths of Lake Raystown. Nevertheless, for coldwater species enthusiasts, the best was yet to come. After the construction of Lake Raystown, Comission biologists conducted two extensive lake surveys. These biologists concluded that the lower deep-water levels contained colder temperatures that would support trout and related species. It was further determined that there was ample dissolved oxygen to substantiate trout stocking and the stocking of other coldwater species.

To provide a forage fish for these coldwater denizens, rainbow smelt were introduced. For several years after the initial stockings, there was little tangible evidence of the success of this venture. Finally, it happened. Slowly at first, then in increasing numbers, the Raystown Lake smelt population expanded.

Raystown Lake now features an annual spring smelt run. Each year, usually during late March or early April, the smelt begin their annual migration up this impoundment's feeder streams. Enthusiastic smelt netters, who carefully monitor the streams, spread the word, "the smelt run is on."

Even though a lake trout and brown trout stocking program has been going on since the early 1980s, for many years, anglers paid little angling attention to these coldwater species. In the mid-1980s, several groups of Raystown Lake anglers experimented with downrigging for lake trout and brown trout. These early pioneers enjoyed some limited success, with catches in the 2-pound to 3-pound category. However, these early downrigger enthusiasts confirmed that a trout population was becoming established.

Beginning in 1990, trout angling at Raystown Lake finally came into its own. Brown trout and lake trout, which were initially taken incidentally while anglers were fishing for stripers, now became the fish of choice.



graphic- Ted Walke

Raystown Lake's Coldwater Trophies

Techniques

Even though some brown trout and an occasional rainbow trout are caught in Raystown Lake, the lake trout presently reigns supreme. Impoundment anglers use a variety of trout-taking techniques. However, the most commonly accepted method is trolling. Most of the veteran lake trout anglers at Raystown troll with electric motors instead of gas motors. In addition to the economical factor, they also believe they have better boat control.

Most of the local anglers use the tried-and-true lake trout trolling techniques developed at other impoundments. However, because of the uniqueness of this combined warmwater and coldwater fishery, some Raystown Lake trout-taking refinements have been developed. One of these refinements involves water temperature. The majority of reference books indicate that a lake trout's comfort zone is 48 to 52 degrees, but veteran Raystown anglers indicated that most lakers are taken in 44- to 47-degree water.

Before 1992, inspections of lake trout stomachs indicated that most were feeding on smelt. During late 1992 and through 1993, alewives appear to be the lake trout's main diet. One Raystown enthusiast prefers trolling at speeds of 1 to 2 mph. He pays little attention to fishing depth, depending on water temperature as his lake trout guide. During the spring, lake trout generally are found in the top 20 feet of water. During the summer, the optimum depth is about 46 feet, with brown trout located in the 18-foot range. By early fall, lakers have moved up to the 30-foot depth, with brown trout still hovering close to the 15-foot mark. By December, the lakers are in the 20-foot range.

Many Raystown Lake trout enthusiasts have their own theories why more numbers of lake trout are available than are their brown trout cousins. The speculation is that the lakers comfort zone is deeper than that of brown trout and stripers. The lake trout have little competition for available food and when fingerling size, they have fewer predators preying on them.

Most of the lake trout action is from the Nancy's Camp area near milemarker 15 down to the breast of the dam. It's theorized that the dissolved oxygen in the lower end of the impoundment appears more suited for trout. The fact that most of the impoundment's deeper water is in this area is also a valid consideration.

Spoons in the two- to three-inch class appear to be the best lake trout medicine. Luhr-Jenson needlefish and the Alpena Diamond were the 1993 standbys. The favorite lure color for Raystown Lake trout appears to be silver, a similar color to smelt and alewives, which are the primary lake trout food source.

The biggest drawback to fishing for lake trout in Raystown Lake is keeping downrigging gear clear of submerged trees. When the impoundment was filled, most trees that would be under 25 feet of water were left standing. That requires trolling enthusiasts to follow the old river channel closely where the water is deeper and little underwater obstructions are located. First-time Raystown Lake trout fishermen, after losing lures, attractors and sometimes their downriggers, soon learn to pay attention to trolling routes.

Coldwater fishing program

Brown trout in the 10- to 12-pound class are often recorded. One local fishing guide reports that in one morning's fishing, two clients boated six brown trout with a total weight of over 60 pounds.

On Saturday, July 3, 1993, Huntingdon angler Bud Patterson, while fishing the lake's tailrace waters, landed a new state record brown trout. The trophy brown measured 34 inches and weighed 17 pounds, 14 1/2 ounces. The former state record, which was beaten by 13 ounces, had been taken from Lake Wallenpaupack in 1988.

The new state record brown was enticed with a quarter-ounce chartreuse spinner tied to 10-pound-test line. Throughout the spring and summer of 1993, the tailrace waters produced numerous brown trout and lake trout trophies.

Even though few rainbow trout have been caught in Raystown Lake, in September 1993, Harry Behe, Sr., of Lilly, PA, landed a 10-pound, 5-ounce trophy measuring 27 inches long. The rainbow was taken on a spoon. Rainbows were initially stocked at this impoundment. It is also believed that some rainbows, stocked into a local trout stream that empties into Raystown, escape into the impoundment.

Lake trout have not attained the size of Raystown's brown trout, but laker trophies in the 12-pound-plus class have received their due recognition. Most of the lake trout taken are in the 25- to 30-inch size and weigh five to seven pounds.

Atlantic salmon

With an established lake trout and brown trout fishery and an occasional trophy rainbow as an added bonus, could Raystown Lake coldwater enthusiasts reasonably expect further diversification? Hopefully, they can. Early reports now indicate that Atlantic salmon may be this impoundment's next success story.

In September 1988, the initial 2,000 Atlantic salmon, most measuring eight inches, were stocked in Raystown Lake. Since then, an additional 200,000 have been planted.

Atlantic salmon can live in landlocked lakes. However, when transplanted to impoundments like Raystown, which have free-running river access, biologists have noted brief spawning runs. It's not yet been determined whether salmon reproduction will occur in Raystown Lake. Fortunately, the Fish and Boat Commission anticipates continuing the salmon stocking program to help sustain this viable fishery.

By 1991, it was determined that the Raystown Lake salmon program showed a potential for success. That year, several legal salmon, measuring about 18 inches and weighing three pounds, were taken from impoundment waters. Since then, only isolated catches have been substantiated, but salmon trophies have become larger.

On May 10, 1993, Brent Hamlon, a Penn State student, was fishing the Raystown Lake tailrace waters. He hooked and landed a 30-inch Atlantic salmon weighing 10 pounds, 6 ounces. This trophy immediately captured the attention of Raystown regulars. In late 1993, Tim Grace caught a salmon measuring 31 inches and weighing 10 pounds, 4 1/4 ounces.

Few dispute that other Pennsylvania waterways surpass Raystown Lake when angling for some particular fish species. However, with the addition of brown trout, lake trout and Atlantic salmon as additional coldwater opportunities, this impoundment offers diversification that few other waterways can match.

HIGHLANDS LARGEMOUTH BASS

by Mike Bleech



photo-Mike Bleech

Only the rings from my purple plastic worm prevented the water from staying perfectly flat. The air was so thick with humidity that we could not even tell where the sun was in the sky. Every day for the past week the temperature had climbed into the 90s. It was hard to be enthusiastic about anything. We were fishing lazily, working plastic worms slowly around trees standing in 10 feet of green water.

A tick on the line, the first action of any kind during the two hours we had been fishing, stirred me out of the daze I was in. I let the fish pull the line tight. Then I set the hook hard, finishing with my arms and the bowed rod straight over my head. The fish moved directly away. I had tightened the drag for sure hook-setting, and was about to pay for that mistake.

This was the most powerful largemouth I had ever hooked. It pulled my arms down until the rod tip was underwater. Then it pulled our inflatable boat until it lodged against a tree. Too late I fumbled to loosen the drag. Before I could, the hook ripped from the bass, sprung out of shape.

How big? I have caught 6-pounders that did not pull like that. Not even close.

This does not sound like a story about the Allegheny Highlands, the heartland of trout country, where most of the water flows swiftly in cool brooks. But it is. The highlands of our northcentral counties has some fine largemouth bass fishing.

Note that virtually all the largemouth bass waters in this region are manmade impoundments. No wonder there is no largemouth fishing tradition! I grew up in the Allegheny Highlands during the 1950s and 60s, and thought of largemouths as exotic. Bass still have not replaced trout as the main fishing attraction in the highlands, nor will they ever. The situation has changed considerably though, thanks to these relatively new reservoirs.

My pal Worth Hammond and I made a project of sampling some of the best largemouth bass waters in the northcentral counties last summer. It was during the hottest summer I can recall in this part of the country. We enjoyed

Cowanesque Lake's enlargement could create a fishing bonanza that might last for several years.

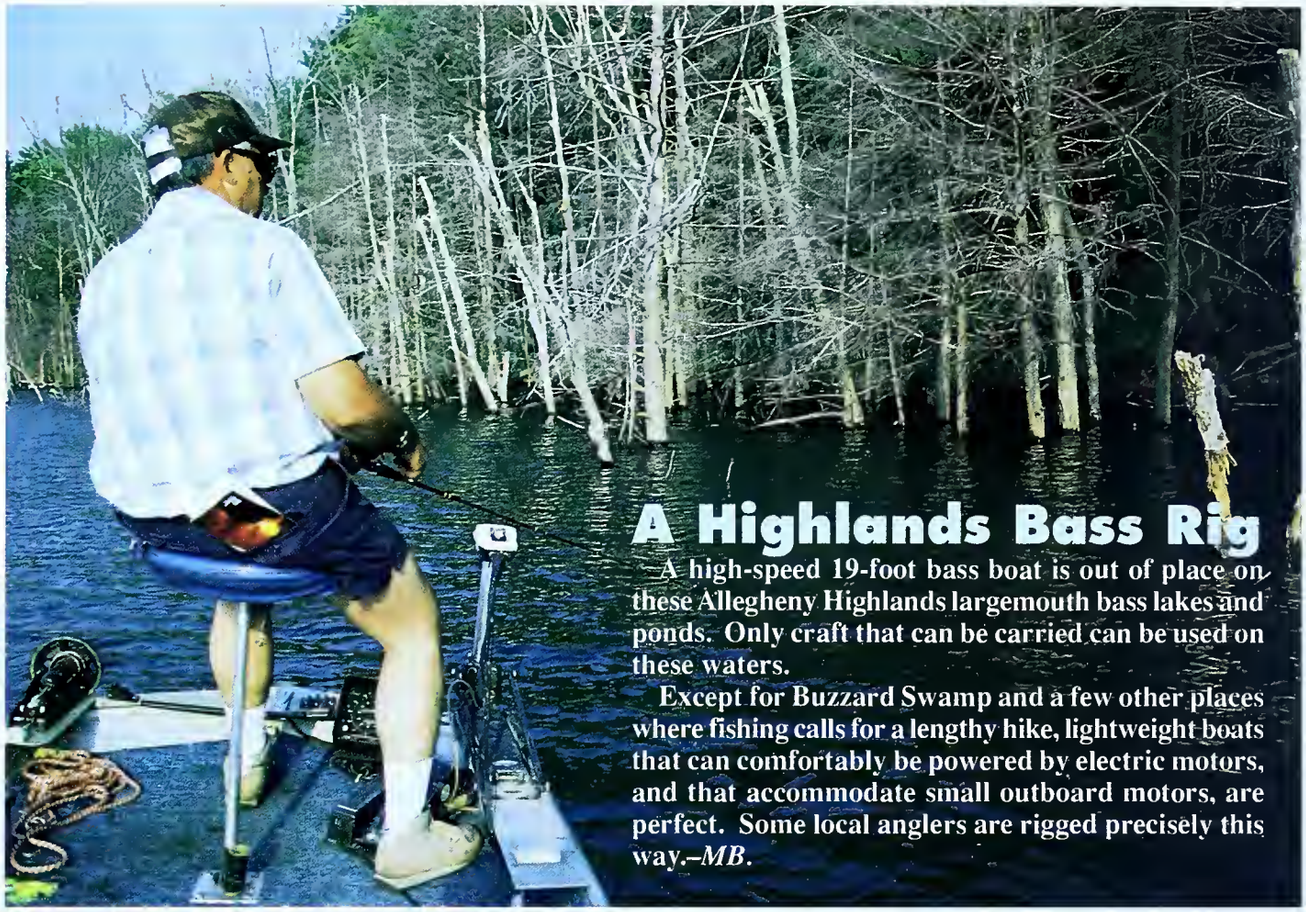


photo-Mike Bleech

A Highlands Bass Rig

A high-speed 19-foot bass boat is out of place on these Allegheny Highlands largemouth bass lakes and ponds. Only craft that can be carried can be used on these waters.

Except for Buzzard Swamp and a few other places where fishing calls for a lengthy hike, lightweight boats that can comfortably be powered by electric motors, and that accommodate small outboard motors, are perfect. Some local anglers are rigged precisely this way.–*MB*.

some nighttime relief by camping at the highest elevations. We hit the lakes mornings and evenings, and then retreated to air conditioned restaurants for long lunches, or to the ridge tops again at midday.

We found a different brand of bass fishing than we find at our better known lakes. For a couple of worn out tournament anglers like Worth and me, it was a welcome change.

Except for Cowanesque Lake, you do not hear the roar of big horsepower motors. Even there you can get away from it in no-wake areas. On the others, the sound of combustion motors is pleasantly missing.

And the bass fishing? ...more pleasant surprises.

Buzzard Swamp

After the experience I related in the opening, which occurred during my first visit to Buzzard Swamp, I was eager to fish there again. And I have numerous times. My visit last summer was typical. During a full afternoon of fishing, we released three bass. That may not be a lot of action, but the smallest bass weighed just shy of 3 pounds, and the largest was a shade over 6 pounds.

In spite of the difficulty of fishing here, this small lake gets quite a bit of fishing pressure. This pressure is measured by Allegheny Highlands standards, though. An angler from anywhere else in the state would consider the lake lightly fished.

Located just east from Marienville on the border of Forest and Elk counties, Buzzard Swamp is actually a series of waterfowl ponds managed by the Game Commission. A sign where the road leading to these ponds is gated explains where fishing is allowed. From the sign, the walk to the main pond is more than a mile.

Several local anglers have devised ways to get lightweight boats onto the water. This usually involves wheels. My solution is a good inflatable craft that I carry on a pack frame. Seven small boats were on the main pond during the busiest day I have seen there.

Camping is not allowed in the Buzzard Swamp area. However, it is allowed at nearby Beaver Meadows Lake, a 50-acre pond managed by the U.S. Forest Service. This lake also has respectable largemouth bass fishing.

Cowanesque Lake

"Last year they had 33 tournaments on Cowanesque Lake," Butch McDivitt, owner of McDivitt Sporting Goods, explained. "This year, 35, I think."

McDivitt said the winning weights in tournaments have been increasing since the lake was enlarged a few years ago. Two years ago, a 6-pound, 3-ounce largemouth bass was caught and released during a tournament.

Artificial lakes generally undergo a fishing boom lasting several years. Typically it begins to peak about five years after the reservoir was initially filled. Since Cowanesque Lake's enlargement from 410 acres to 1,090 acres was essentially the same as filling a new lake, we can hope for a fishing boom at this northern Tioga County impoundment.

McDivitt is serious about his fishing, too. "I usually go out fishing in the morning at 5:30 or 6:00, then come back here and open up," he said.

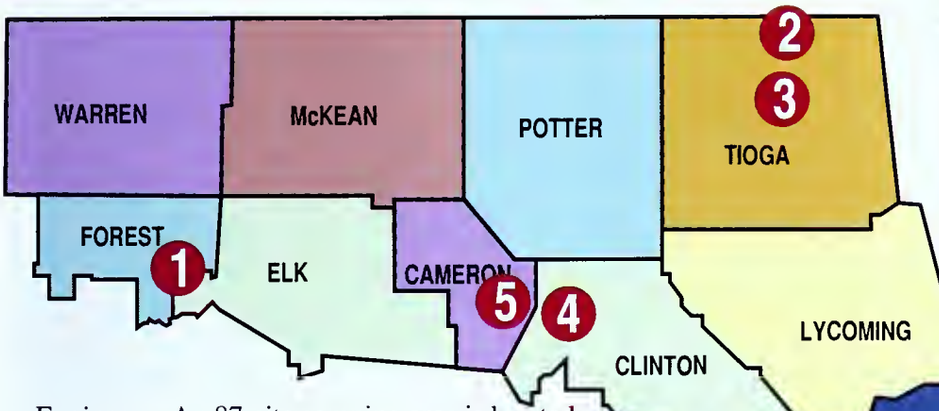
Early in the morning he suggests using topwater lures. His favorites are the Crippled Killer, Zara Spook and Ugly Albert. When the bass are less aggressive, he likes using jigs.

We hit the water late in the afternoon. Nothing showed interest in our plastic worms that we worked around standing timber along a steep bank. The water was 40 feet deep on the outside edge of that flooded timber.

Worth caught the first bass of the afternoon in a small cut that was filled with windswept debris. It struck a white spinnerbait with a yellow split-tail trailer.

McDivitt's advice about the topwater lures proved true when the sun hit the horizon. Five rose to my black Ugly Albert.

Cowanesque Lake is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of



Waterway	*County*	*Size*	*Managed by*
1. Buzzard Swamp	Forest/Elk	65 acres	PA Game Commission
2. Cowanesque L.	Tioga	1,090 acres	Corps of Engineers
3. Hills Creek Lake	Tioga	137 acres	State Park
4. Kettle Creek L.	Clinton	160 acres	State Park
5. Stevenson Res.	Cameron	142 acres	State Park

Engineers. An 87-site camping area is located on the northern shore. There is no horsepower restriction on boats. However, there are extensive no-wake areas.

Look for both largemouths and smallmouths in flooded timber in the no-wake zone at the upper end of the lake. Fishing should improve here during this summer and the next few summers, making Cowanesque Lake the best largemouth bass water in the region.

Hills Creek Lake

Right from the beginning, Hills Creek Lake gave us a hard time. Getting Worth's 15-foot aluminum bass boat off the trailer was a chore. That shallow ramp is made for 8-inch tires. We had 12-inchers. Then the bass would not cooperate.

We chatted with every angler we passed. A few had caught bass earlier in the morning. One said fishing had been very good until a couple of days ago, then it shut down.

When was the last time an outdoor writer admitted he did not catch a fish the entire time he visited a lake? This time we got whipped. Pay that no mind. This is not the best place to fish if you want to catch a lot of bass. But if you want to fish in a peaceful setting with a fair chance of catching a big bass, try Hills Creek Lake.

The lake is shallow. Aquatic vegetation is the main cover. Weed beds are dense in the upper two-thirds of the lake, tapering to sporadic clumps of weeds around the deepest part of the channel in the lower third.

Come here equipped with a large selection of plastic worms and weedless topwater lures. Heavy line is a must in the dense cover.



Well away from the beaten path in central Tioga County, between Wellsboro and Mansfield, you need a good map to find your way. The lake is part of Hills Creek State Park, which has a 110-site camping area and 10 rental cabins. Gas-powered motors are not allowed on the lake. Rowboats and canoes can be rented from a park concession. Park literature boasts, "It is not uncommon to see a four-foot muskellunge or eight-pound bass taken from these waters."

Kettle Creek Lake

All day it had threatened to rain. We were hoping it would. Rain would be a refreshing relief from the heat.

"Hold on!" I said to Worth as he backed the boat down the launch ramp. "Look up the valley. I think we're going to get rain real soon."

"Then we'll wait it out. It won't last long," Worth replied.

Overhead the sky was washed-out blue. Up the valley and moving toward us were dark clouds. When the clouds rolled around the nearest bend in the valley, we could see rain. The showers passed in a half-hour, trailing off to a light drizzle.

We started launching the boat again in the drizzle. That felt nice. By the time we headed toward some lily pads across the lake from the ramp, the sky was bluer than it had been for days.

The bass must have approved of the rain. They were looking skyward. We had some good topwater action for a while.

Highlands Largemouth BASS



George B. Stevenson Reservoir
Cameron County

We were surprised to watch about a dozen boats launch while we fished the pads. After our action tapered off, we worked our way down the lake toward the area where most of the other boats had gone, in the vicinity of the swimming beach. Obviously they knew what they were doing. The bass were not large, at least none that we saw, but there were plenty of them.

We chatted with several of the anglers. "It gets a lot of pressure for a small lake," noted Bill Penton, a school teacher at nearby Renovo. Penton fishes for bass often here and at Stevenson Reservoir.

"I'd like to see them put a 15-inch size limit on it," he offered. "I don't think people abuse this lake, though. They'll let 18-inch bass go."

Worth and I were off the lake sooner than most of the other anglers. While they fished in the darkness, we cooked venison steaks and fried potatoes over charcoal. It was a very quiet evening. When fish splashed close to one of the boats, the aluminum side resonated the sound in the narrow valley. We could not hear any talking on the lake, but we could hear laughter, usually right after the metallic splashing.

Even though many local anglers bottom-fish with live minnows and other baits, consider suspending your bait under slip bobbers. One way to locate bass is to troll very slowly or drift with this rig. The water is quite clear and free of obstructions away from the lily pads, so light line usually means more hits.

Kettle Creek Lake is part of Kettle Creek State Park. Only non-powered and electric-powered boats are allowed. The park has two 40-site camping areas.

Stevenson Reservoir

Fishing was as poor as the morning was beautiful. Heavy fog hung just over Stevenson Reservoir, wavering funnels still tickling the surface when we started fishing early in the morning. We fished the east side thoroughly until we got close to the dam. The fog climbed and dissipated while rich blue patches of sky got bigger and bigger. The contrast of crisp blue sky, soft white fog, and many hued green hillsides in bright sunlight was so strikingly beautiful, it appeared surrealistic. Imagine how you might paint an enchanted forest.

Starting with topwater lures we tried just about everything in our tackle boxes–crankbaits in every shape and color, spinnerbaits, jigs, plastic worms, jigging spoons. Not a tap!

Worth turned the speed up a couple of notches on the electric motor for the return up the west shoreline. Our enthusiasm was gone. The temperature had climbed again into the low 90s. A few days of living in the van with the heat had sapped our energy.

As we passed an oldtimer and a youngster together in a boat, Worth asked "How's the fishing?"

"Oh...a few," the oldtimer answered after waiting so long we thought he was ignoring us. He turned away to make a cast, then learned toward us and spoke again. "Last evening we got 29 here."

"Largemouths?" Worth asked.

"Most of them. A couple were smallmouths."

Their boat was anchored near shore but close to water at least 10 feet deep. They still-fished with live minnows on the bottom. Some hot honey hole! I started sketching a map so I could find that exact spot sometime when I returned. Then I though about it, crumpled up the incomplete sketch and stuffed it in our garbage sack.

We'll try Stevenson Reservoir again, all right. Maybe this fall for muskies.

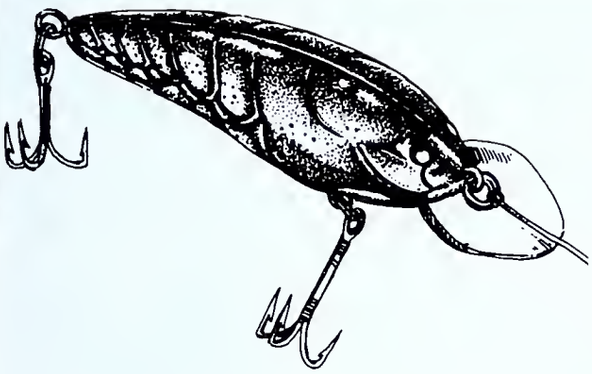
Stevenson Reservoir is in Sinnemahoning State Park. Only non-powered and electric-powered boats are permitted. A 35-site campground is located about 3 miles upriver from the lake.

Look for the biggest bass in this system using lures that look like small trout. Try twitching with thin, floating minnow lures in the upper end of the lake, or along the shoreline. Toward the deeper, steeper end of the lake, use deep-diving crankbaits or jigs. If you want to get really tricky, try 4-inch, blue plastic worms, using 6-pound line.

Nature Faire

The first annual Nature Faire will be held Sunday, July 17, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Schuylkill County Fairgrounds and Environmental Education Center in Summit Station. The event promises to be a fun, nature-oriented experience for the entire family. Activities include a wildlife talk, an adult archery shoot and a youth archery safety and 3-D shoot, a kids' fishing program (with equipment and bait provided), a hands-on wildlife museum, petting zoo and pony rides, and an art and craft show. Participating agencies include the Foundation for Agriculture and Resource Management, Schuylkill County Fair Association, PA Fish & Boat Commission, PA Game Commission, DER Bureau of Forestry, Schuylkill County Sportsmen's Association, Friedensburg Archery Club, Trout Unlimited, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Schuylkill County 4-H, Schuylkill Keep It Pretty (SKIP) and the Schuylkill Conservation District. Admission is $2, with children age 6 and under admitted free. All proceeds from this event benefit the Shadle Conservation Center. For more information, please call 717-429-1529.–*Charrie Seifert.*

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Crankbaits are effective lures for smallmouth bass. They are easy to control by varying the speed of your retrieve. Stock your tackle box with lures with different lengths of bills. Short bills run shallow. Longer bills cause the crankbait to dive deeper below the surface.

When nymphing pocket water for trout, use short casts and cast the fly up and across the current, working the fly on a dead-drift through the pockets. Hold the rod up at a 45-degree angle and follow the fly with the rod tip, lowering the rod as the fly drifts past you, maintaining contact with the fly.

Keep a small chunk of styrofoam on your fly tying bench. When you finish a fly, stick the hook into the styrofoam to hold the fly while the head cement dries.

If you accidentally cast your lure over a tree limb, don't yank the rod back because this will likely bury the hook into the snag. Instead, try the "swing" method. Reel steadily until your lure swings just under the limb, then as the plug swings away from the limb, pull smoothly back on your rod, swinging the lure up and over the snag.

Choosing the color of lure to use is often a difficult decision. In stained or muddy water, try lures in gray, green, purple or blue. In clear water, red, black and gold are effective colors to start with.

Floating/diving lures are deadly on bass. In calm water, surface retrieves are often best, but when there's a chop on the water, use a faster retrieve with sharp rod movements. Try reeling fast to pull the bait below the water's surface, pausing frequently to allow the lure to pop back to the surface.

The next time you are flipping a worm in open water for bass, try the Carolina rig. Tie a barrel swivel approximately 1 1/2 feet above your worm, with a slip sinker on the opposite side of the swivel from your worm.

Fishing at night can be productive during the summer. Make sure to carry a flashlight in case of emergencies and to help with changing lures and flies, and carefully scout during the daylight hours the water that you are to fish that night. Make special note of any problem areas such as holes and submerged structure, as well as any snags above the water that might cause problems while casting.

Spring creek trout are wary by nature, and fishing for them can involve as much stalking as it can involve actual fishing. Keep a low profile and move quietly along the bank, stopping often to study the water for signs of fish. Your approach and your presentation are as important as the fly you select. Dress in subdued colors.

illustration- Ted Walke

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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Manhart Receives Award

Ed Manhart, Chief of the Commission Bureau of Law Enforcement, recently received the 1993 International Game Warden Fraternal and Humanitarian Award from *International Game Warden* magazine. The award, which was presented at a meeting of the Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, honors individuals considered to be outstanding natural resource law enforcement administrators. Manhart's achievements as bureau director include hiring additional waterways conservation officers, upgrading WCO sidearm and field equipment, obtaining surveillance equipment and field sobriety testing kits, and starting a computer program that links the officers in the field to the headquarters office database.–*Charrie Seifert.*

BACKTALK

Would you like a photograph of you and your catch to appear in *Pennsylvania Angler*? Send a photograph of you and your catch to the *Angler* for publication consideration in the "Currents" section. Please send only snapshots and prints, either color or black-and-white. Please–no slides and no pictures larger than 8x10. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your picture returned. Letters are edited for clarity and space considerations.

Address correspondence to: Art Michaels, Editor, *Pennsylvania Angler*, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

First the Zebra Mussel, Now the Quagga Mussel

Since 1992, we have watched the successful colonization of Lake Erie by another exotic, unwanted animal from Europe. The Quagga mussel has quickly adopted the deep-water habitats of Lake Erie, where its relative, the Zebra Mussel, prefers not to live. Although at first look the Quagga can be confused with the Zebra mussel, it is generally larger and seems to be much more tolerant of temperature extremes. The Quagga mussel has other competitive advantages because it is more prolific and can colonize a greater variety of habitats than the Zebra.

Recent trawling surveys conducted by the Commission Lake Erie Research Unit have found astronomical numbers of Quaggas in the deeper waters, generally on the mud-clay bottoms at depths of 80 feet or more. Dense sets of mussels have clogged trawl catches and have prematurely worn the bottoms of the trawl nets because of their razor-edged shells.

Of greater concern is the prodigious capacity of the mussel to filter the suspended plankton and biological matter that is the foundation for Lake Erie's food webs. Although mussels have been responsible, in part, for causing unusually clear water in recent years, these conditions, however aesthetically pleasing, may represent serious alterations to the lake's ecosystem, which ultimately may affect productivity of Lake Erie fish stocks.–*Roger B. Kenyon, Fisheries Biologist, Lake Erie Research Unit.*

Vacancy filled in Southcentral Region



Guy A. Bowersox



Larry V. Boor

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer Guy A. Bowersox has been named to the position of Southcentral Region Assistant Supervisor.

Bowersox, a 17-year veteran of the Commission, assumes the position held for the last two years by Larry V. Boor. Boor, an employee of the Commission for more than 22 years, was promoted to Regional Supervisor after the retirement of Frank Schilling.

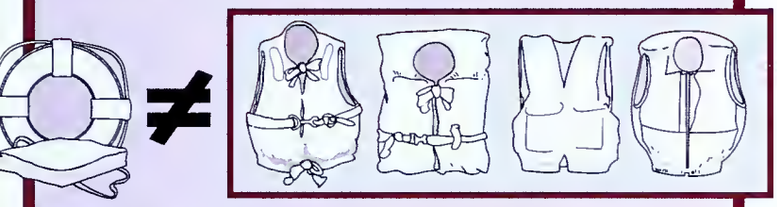
Bowersox began his new assignment May 2. For the past six years he has served as the district officer for Snyder, Union and western Northumberland counties in the Commission's Northcentral Region. Before that, Bowersox spent 11 years in the Southeast as a district officer for Montgomery and Berks counties.

Boor began his Commission career as a deputy in Blair County. In 1969 he was selected to attend the 5th Officer Class at the Stackhouse School. Before assuming the position of Southcentral Region Manager, Boor served as the Region Assistant Supervisor, and before that as a district officer for Lancaster, Franklin, Mercer, Cumberland, York and Adams counties. He was also a member of the Commission Bureau of Law Enforcement Training Cadre and was named Officer of the Year in 1987.

Anglers Currents

PFD Rules to Change in 1995

The U.S. Coast Guard has issued final rules that revise the requirements to carry personal flotation devices (PFDs) on recreational boats. The rules are designed to encourage more boaters to wear the safety equipment and save lifes.



Under the new rule to take effect May 1, 1995, the Type IV PFD–a throwable flotation device (seat cushion or ring buoy)–can no longer be used as a substitute for a wearable device (Type I, II, III or V). On boats under 16 feet in length, wearable PFDs are required to be carried for each person on board.

The requirement for boats 16 feet and longer remains unchanged. There must be a Type I, II, III or V for each person plus one Type IV throwable PFD on the boat.

A little goes a long way

I'd like to thank George Hinkle, an employee of the Commission. George donated a one-year *Angler* subscription to the Coatesville Veterans Medical Center. This generosity and effort contributes toward a better quality of life for our patients. It is very rewarding to be associated with people such as George who have the desire to "give something back" to the hospitalized veterans with whom we are charged.–*Jeffrey R. Fitzsimons, Chief, Voluntary Service, Coatesville Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.*

Adopt-a-Stream Patches

The Commission's Cooperative Adopt-a-Stream Program currently works with its cooperators to improve and restore fish habitats in streams and lakes throughout the Commonwealth. This work requires hard physical labor by members or employees of the cooperating organizations ("parents") that sponsor the Adopt-a-Stream projects. A dedication to Pennsylvania's aquatic resources is visible when these people volunteer a Saturday to accomplish one of these projects or a paid crew puts in an extra effort to make sure the project is accomplished correctly.

To show the Commission's appreciation and gratitude for the hard work and dedication of the individuals accomplishing this work, Adopt-a-Stream patches are given to persons participating in habitat improvement and restoration projects. If you'd like to volunteer to be part of a work crew, find sportsmen's clubs in your areas and mention you'd like to volunteer.

WCO Barry Mechling Honored

Northern Dauphin County Waterways Conservation Officer Barry Mechling was recently named "Officer of the Year" by the Northeastern States Boating Administrators Conference (NESBAC). Mechling was chosen to receive the award from among officers in 12 states. During his 19 years with the Commission, Mechling has worked in many areas of the state. Officer Mechling has



been instrumental in developing boating-under-the-influence training and has encouraged others in the legal system to become involved in boating safety programs. He also teaches several boating safety classes a year, stressing to his students that good boat education and enforcement help to reduce life-threatening situations on the water. In addition to his other duties as a WCO, Mechling serves on the Law Enforcement Advisory Committee of the Commonwealth D.U.I. Association.–*Charrie Seifert.*



Adopt-a-Stream patch

Anglers Currents

New State Record Brook Trout



Shawn J. Keener, 17, Ridgway, holds the new state record brook trout he caught last April 21. The fish weighs 6.63 pounds, and was 26 inches long with a girth of 13 inches. Shawn was fishing the West Branch Clarion River, Elk County. He fooled the big brookie with a minnow. This catch beats the old brook trout record of 6.36 pounds, which has stood since 1984.

Mid-Season Trailer Check

Use these ideas to find a problem before it sidelines your rig.

Winch rope or cable. Make sure it's not frayed. If it is, replace it now.

Coupler assembly. Check for reamed holes and missing bolts. Make sure the ball and coupler fit snugly, but not too loosely or too tightly. Lube a tight-fitting connection. Replace a wobbly one.

Bunks. Check the bunk carpet with the boat off the trailer. If it's worn or missing, replace it before it damages your boat hull.

Rollers, roller arms. Check your trailer's rollers and roller arms with the boat off the trailer. Grease the rollers and roller arms if they're stuck.

Suspension. Leaf springs should be greased now and then to prevent rust. They cannot be galvanized because that process reduces the metal's strength. Springs should curve upward. If they don't they could transfer the bumps and jolts of the road directly to the boat hull and electronics aboard.

Hubs. Prop up each wheel and spin each one slowly with your hand. Listen carefully for gritty, grinding sounds. These symptoms suggest that the hub's inner workings need servicing.

Lights. The most common trailer lighting difficulty is burned out bulbs. Disconnect your trailer lights each time you launch and retrieve. Carry spare bulbs, but be sure you buy the right size bulbs.



photo-Art Michaels

Birds!

This photograph shows a typical "transition" from temporary tent-like netting exclosures to more substantial overhead exclosures over fish-rearing areas at the Huntsdale Fish Culture Station, Cumberland County.

The Commission has been encountering significant losses of fish to avian predators in its 14 fish hatcheries. Fish-eating birds come in a variety of sizes and kinds, from small residential grackles and ducks to larger migratory blue herons and black-crowned night herons. They exact a heavy toll on hatchery fish stocks, especially at night.

The Commission has used many non-lethal measures to discourage fish-eating birds from raiding fish ponds and raceways. These measures have included netting and monofilament lines stretched over fish-rearing areas, alarms, horns, sirens, scarecrows, "scare" balloons, sprinkler systems and rotating beacons. These approaches work, but most of the birds quickly acclimate to these measures.

In 1989, the Commission began building permanent overhead structures–either roofs, or cable and netting–to exclude fish-eating birds from critical rearing areas. So far, permanent structures are in use at five hatcheries, temporary structures are in use at four others, and the Commission plans to construct permanent exclosures at four locations in 1994.–*Dennis C. Ricker, Chief, Division of Trout Production.*

SMART

Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

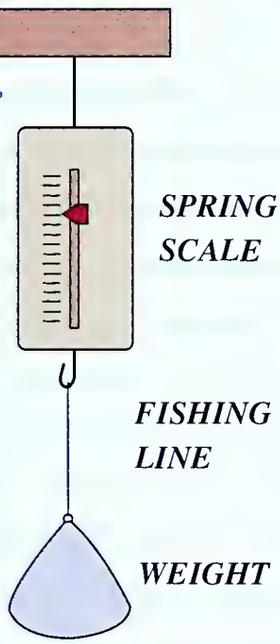
ALL ABOUT FISHING LINES

Using the wrong line can result in fewer fish caught. Examples: While using that thin stuff, a big bass took me into the brush. Nicks on the line weakened it and *snap*, lost fish. Another one: Fishing for those finicky trout. Reel was spooled with the stuff used when fishing for catfish. It is tough, heavy 10-pound test. Fish saw line and wouldn't bite.

Because using the right line can add to success and enjoyment, remember these things when buying new line.

POUND TEST:

THE STRENGTH OF THE LINE. THE NUMBER REFERS TO THE AMOUNT OF WEIGHT REQUIRED TO BREAK THE LINE. NOT ALWAYS GOOD WAY TO COMPARE DIFFERENT BRANDS OF LINE—BRAND X'S FOUR-POUND TEST MAY BE BRAND Z'S SIX-POUND TEST.



TOUGHNESS: HOW MUCH ABUSE CAN LINE STAND BEFORE BREAKING?

SOME LINES HAVE A TOUGH "SKIN" THAT TAKES LOTS OF ABUSE. THESE LINES USUALLY DON'T WORK WELL ON SPINNING OUTFITS OR REELS WITH SMALL SPOOLS. THEY ALSO HAVE A LARGER DIAMETER.

STRETCH: HOW MUCH DOES IT STRETCH?

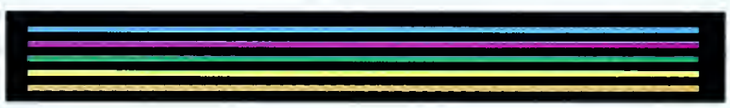
MOST LINE RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX STRETCHES 20 PERCENT OR MORE. WET LINE STRETCHES MORE. SOME BRANDS STRETCH MORE THAN OTHERS. LINES WITH LITTLE BUILT-IN STRETCH CAN BREAK WITH QUICK HOOK SETS. LINES WITH LOTS OF BUILT-IN STRETCH AREN'T GOOD AT SIGNALING LIGHT BITES. SO WHEN AFTER FISH THAT TAKE THE BAIT SOFTLY OR HAVE A TOUGH MOUTH (CATFISH AND MUSKIES), USE A LINE WITH LITTLE STRETCH.

LINE DIAMETER

4 pound test	**.006** inch diameter
6 pound test	**.010** inch diameter
8 pound test	**.012** inch diameter
10 pound test	**.014** inch diameter

DIAMETER: CROSS SECTION OF THE LINE,

MEASURED IN HUNDREDTHS OF AN INCH. THINNER LINE IS LESS VISIBLE TO FISH AND IS EASIER TO CAST. BAITS AND LURES SINK QUICKER ON THIN LINES THAN ON A THICK LINE. THICKER LINES TAKE MORE ABUSE FROM ROCKS, STUMPS AND THE LIKE.



COLOR: LINE COLOR EITHER MAKES IT EASIER FOR THE ANGLER TO SEE THE LINE OR DIFFICULT FOR THE FISH TO SEE IT.

CLEAR LINES ARE THE BEST ALL-AROUND CHOICE. BRIGHTLY COLORED LINE IS IMPORTANT WHEN YOU NEED TO SEE LIGHT BITES. USE DARKER COLORS WHEN YOU NEED TO HIDE LINE FROM FISH.

Line Care: Keep reels, spare spools and extra line out of the sun and cold. Don't touch line when you have bug spray or suntan lotion on the hands. Gasoline and oil can also weaken lines. Respool with fresh line often. Nicks cause line to lose some strength, as much as 20 to 50 percent.

Bottom Line: Don't be intimidated by all this. Buy the best line you can afford. For the average angler, one kind of line (in a range of pound-test) is all that is needed. It should cover about 90 percent of fishing situations. That line should be easy to cast and work with, and stand up to some abuse.

WHAT DOES IT WEIGH?
HOW LONG IS YOUR CATCH?

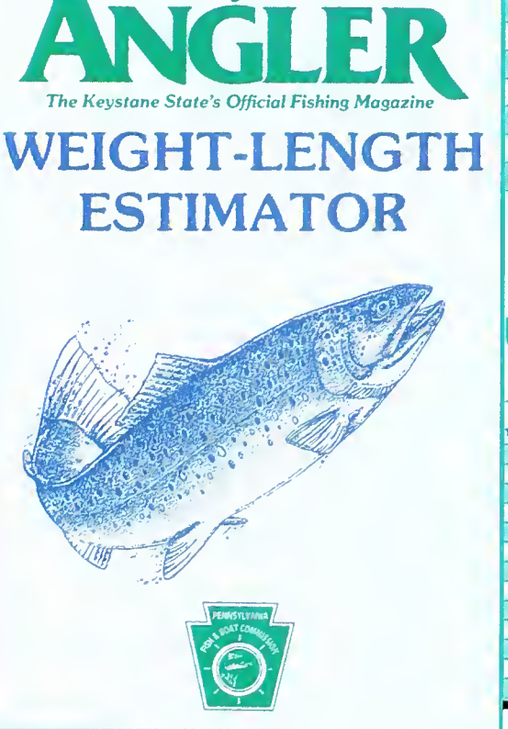
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- Brown trout
- Rainbow trout
- Walleye
- Yellow perch





Largemouth Bass



Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight
5.5	0.1	11	0.6	16.5	2.3	22	5.9
6	0.1	11.5	0.7	17	2.6	22.5	6.4
5	0.1	12	0.8	17.5	2.8	23	6.9
	0.1	12.5	0.9	18	3.1	23.5	7.4
5	0.2	13	1.1	18.5	3.4	24	7.9
	0.2	13.5	1.2	19	3.7	24.5	8.4
5	0.3	14	1.4	19.5	4.0	25	9.0
	0.3	14.5	1.5	20	4.4	25.5	9.6
5	0.4	15	1.7	20.5	4.7	26	10.2
	0.5	15.5	1.9	21	5.1	26.5	10.9
5	0.5	16	2.1	21.5	5.5	27	11.6

uskellunge



Purebred Weight	Tiger Weight
0.1	0.1
0.1	0.1
0.1	0.1
0.1	0.1
0.1	0.1
0.2	0.2
0.2	0.2
0.2	0.2
0.3	0.3
0.3	0.3
0.3	0.3
0.4	0.4
0.5	0.4

Inches	Purebred Weight	Tiger Weight
14.5	0.7	0.6

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Straight Talk

Federal Aid in Sport Restoration

Did you know that many fishing and boating opportunities you enjoy are funded in part by federal excise taxes and import duties on the sale of fishing equipment, motorboat fuels, pleasure boats and yachts? It's true–about 17 percent of the Fish and Boat Commission's annual budget is funded through several federal programs. Most important but widely unknown is the Sport Fish Restoration Act. This act was a result of concerns voiced by anglers, boaters, the fishing and boating industry and state government resource conservation agencies for a permanent, predictable source of funds to support and enhance sport fishing and boating programs throughout the United States.

In 1950 the Sport Fish Restoration Act, known popularly as the Dingell-Johnson Act, was passed to provide federal funding to the states for the restoration, conservation, management and enhancement of sport fishing opportunities. Later the Act was expanded to provide extra funding to the Sport Fish Restoration Program by placing additional federal excise taxes on a wider range of fishing tackle and equipment, gasoline used in motorboats, and duties on imported boats and fishing tackle. This action became known as the 1984 Wallop-Breaux Amendment. It provided funding for increased boating access development and aquatic resources education programs. The amendment mandated that each state must spend at least 12.5 percent of its annual apportionment on development and maintenance of boating access facilities. Additionally, the states are allowed to spend up to 10 percent on an aquatic resource education program.



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

So when you see this logo displayed on fishing tackle and equipment, your purchase is supporting sport fish restoration and enhancement projects.

What did this amendment do for Pennsylvania? It provided a significant boost to the Commission's programs that provide fishing and boating opportunities to some two million Pennsylvanians and thousands of annual visitors.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program is a good example of a "user pays, user benefits" program. Anglers and boaters pay for and receive direct benefits from this federally funded program. These federal dollars represent a considerable and important portion of the Commission's budget. During 1993, your Commission received $6,116,200 in federal funds through the Sport Fish Restoration Program. These funds were matched with fishing license and boat registration revenue of $2,225,400 resulting in $8,341,600 for the continuation and enhancement of sport fishing and boating opportunities. To provide a degree of flexibility, Pennsylvania is able to use third-party contributions of cash, real property, materials and services on approved projects to satisfy the Fish and Boat Commission's required 25 percent share of the cost of a project. How were these funds used by the Fish and Boat Commission?

Sport Fish Restoration Act funds provided Pennsylvania with the following important services in 1993:

- Valuable land and stream acreage was acquired for fishing and boating recreation.
- One fishing and boat access was completed and another site was partially developed.
- Technical guidance and assistance were provided to other government agencies, resource organizations and private landowners.
- Educational classes and seminars were conducted for the protection and wise use of aquatic resources.
- Fisheries research and fisheries management plans were developed to enhance fish production and fish stocking operations.
- Hatchery systems were improved to provide needed environmental and production efficiency.

Nationally, Sport Fish Restoration funds are provided to state fish and wildlife agencies for research, management, education, land acquisition, property development, operation and maintenance of facilities, technical information assistance and for planning and coordination activities. Pennsylvania can write individual grants for buying aquatic habitat, conducting research and surveys on fish populations, offering educational programs on aquatic resources, building boat access facilities and operating fish hatcheries. Also available to Pennsylvania is the opportunity to submit project proposals for funding under three competitive grant programs: Anadromous Fish, Endangered Species and the Clean Vessel Act. Funding for these programs is not always available, and when available, funds are awarded to projects with the highest national priority. Not all projects are funded.

It is also important to know that certain activities are prohibited for consideration under the Sport Fish Restoration Act. These include:

- Public relations activities for promoting agency organizations, publication of agency magazines, displays and exhibits for public viewing.
- Activities associated with producing revenue through the sale of licenses or permits imposed by law or regulation.
- Services or material property to individuals or groups for commercial purposes.
- Enforcement activities of fish and boat laws and regulations that include Waterways Conservation Officer patrols, investigations and law enforcement training.

The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program, a cooperative effort involving federal and state government agencies, anglers and boaters, and the sport fishing industry, has been most successful. The program has increased sport fishing and boating opportunities through the wise investment of angler and boater tax dollars in state sport fishery and boating development projects. Additional federal funding could be made available if the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission increases the number of fishing licenses sold. For each license sold, your Commission is eligible to receive approximately $3.00 in federal funds to promote fishing and boating recreation. Do your part–buy a fishing license. Better yet, have a friend buy one, too.

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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

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This issue's cover photograph was taken by Barry & Cathy Beck. The picture shows Angler *contributor Ed Howey with a hefty rainbow trout he caught in northcentral Pennsylvania.*

Fish ladder

Last May I drove to Easton to photograph the new fish ladder at the Easton Dam, at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh rivers. When one kid understood what the ladder did, he said, "Hey, that's cool." Another said, "Neat." Parents raised their eyebrows and nodded approval. Everyone peered into the glass-enclosed run, eager to see a migrating fish.

I imagined a bright spring day in the future when more than 100,000 shad would move through the ladder–here and on the fish lifts yet to be built on the Susquehanna River. I pictured re-energized, keen interest statewide in migratory fish restoration and conservation. I saw angler interest blossom. I imagined Aprils, Mays and Junes spurred more than ever by the economic surge that shad anglers would trigger, combing the Lehigh and Susquehanna river valleys. I saw the advantages for tackle shops, sporting goods stores, tackle manufacturers, boat dealers, boat manufacturers, boating accessory manufacturers and sellers, outboard makers, outfitters, guides, mail order companies, gas stations, restaurants, motels, convenience stores, swelling state tax revenue from all this activity, increased fishing license sales and boat registrations, and new jobs.

"Migratory fish restoration," I thought. "Hey, that's cool."

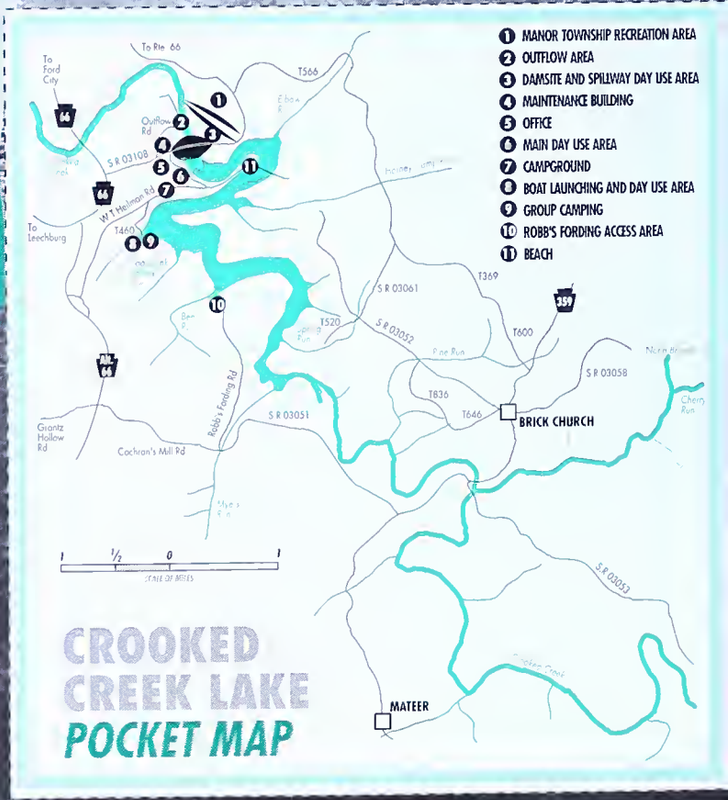
–Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.

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Crooked Creek Lake LARGEMOUTH BASS

by Jeff Knapp

Sea Nymp



"Footballs." That's the way Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee describes the largemouth bass in Armstrong County's Crooked Creek Lake. A few short years ago, if you were to find a football in Crooked Creek, it would most likely have been one of the pigskin variety, perhaps washed into the watershed during high water. Fat, healthy bigmouth bass weren't a factor in what was then a sterile lake, short on baitfish and gamefish and long on mine acid pollution.

Subsequent years have been good to this waterway, though. Levels of acid mine drainage have lessened. Baitfish, more specifically gizzard shad, introduced by the Fish and Boat Commission, have provided the lake's gamefish with a much needed source of forage. The largemouth bass, and those who fish for them, have been the biggest beneficiaries of these positive changes.



Characteristics

Crooked Creek Lake is a federal flood control project, constructed and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is one of 16 facilities in the Corps Pittsburgh District, and provides protection for the lower Allegheny and Ohio rivers. In addition to flood control, water can be released from Crooked Creek Lake during dry periods to augment water supplies in downstream municipalities.

As its name implies, Crooked Creek follows a serpentine route from its origin in Indiana County to its confluence with the Allegheny River in Armstrong County. The lake is formed by an earthen dam located nearly seven miles upstream from the Crooked Creek's merger with the Allegheny. The resultant pool is over five miles long, but because of the narrow, twisting valley in which the lake lies, it covers only 350 surface acres. The maximum depth is in the 40-foot range.

The lake is located just off PA Route 66, about midway between Leechburg and Ford City. In addition to the Armstrong County area, Crooked Creek provides fishing and boating opportunities for many people in southwestern Pennsylvania, including heavily populated Allegheny and Westmoreland counties.

Bass fishery

According to Paul Toman, Crooked Creek Lake's resource manager, more bass fishermen are taking advantage of the waterway's offerings.

"I look at fishing here as on the increase," says Toman. "It appears that there are more and more bass tournaments every year. We have 15 or 16 tournaments by different bass organizations."

Toman says these events were scheduled on Crooked Creek as early as March this year, and extend into October. This lengthy season is a result, in part, to the fact that Crooked Creek isn't drawn down in the fall, as are most federal flood control lakes.

"Normally the reservoir is maintained at an elevation of 845 yearround. But during heavy snowfall and rain the pool can rise as much as 20 feet," he says.

The upper portion of Crooked Creek Lake has a fair amount of weed growth, thanks in part to the lack of a winter drawdown. Toman says that much has been done in recent years to add to the amount of wood cover in the lake.

"For a number of years we were using triangles from tires. But we've now gone more toward tree structures. Our biologists tell us they make better habitat," says Toman. Most of the woody structures that have been planted in the lake are comprised of Christmas trees, and are in depths out to about 15 feet.

One of the reasons for the increasingly healthy fish populations in Crooked Creek Lake is better water quality. The watershed flows through coal mining country. In fact, its headwaters are located near the Indiana County community of Ernest, where mining activities of decades past furnish the stream with a huge influx of mine water.

For several years a treatment facility–the Carl White plant–operated on Crooked Creek near the Ernest-Creekside area, but was shut down for economic reasons. Water quality improved during the facility's operation, and despite its closing, the lake's overall aquatic chemistry continues to improve.

According to Commission Area Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, one of the major factors helping the Crooked Creek watershed is releases of water from another reservoir.

Crooked Creek Lake LARGEMOUTH BASS

"Back in the early 1970s there wasn't much there. The upper part of Crooked Creek Lake was hammered pretty bad. I guess one of the things that has helped the water quality there is stable water quality coming out of Keystone Lake."

The waters from Keystone Lake, a 1,000-acre lake that serves as a water supply for Keystone Generating Station (and is leased to the Fish and Boat Commission for recreational purposes), enter Crooked Creek near Elderton.

Ironically, anglers fishing Keystone Lake the past several years have been concerned over summertime drawdowns that have resulted in a lowering of the lake's pool. This was particularly evident during the drought years of 1988 and 1991. Even though the common perception is that the bulk of the water goes to the power station's cooling towers, the fact is, significant releases are made during dry periods to maintain decent water quality in Crooked Creek.

It's a case of what's good for one system may be occurring at the expense of another, and a good example of how precious a commodity clean water is.

"We take water samples weekly, and send them to one of our hydrology labs in Pittsburgh," Toman says. "They run the test, and twice or so a year I get a report. Every year there's been an improvement in water quality."

Ron Lee has been impressed with what he's seen during survey work on Crooked Creek in recent years.

"Back in 1976 we really didn't have anything going on in the lake. Things have gone up pretty significantly since then," Lee says. "One of the major factors in that is that we stocked gizzard shad in there in 1986, some 5,000 adults. We went down and looked at the lake thereafter and found a pretty fantastic bass population. The bass looked like footballs. It's really gratifying to see the fishery bounce back."

Surveys conducted in 1990 and 1992 have enabled Lee to measure the Crooked Creek Lake largemouth bass population. The 1990 survey, which included two hours of electrofishing, was the first conducted after the gizzard shad stocking. The total catch per effort was 124 bass per hour. Of these, 11.5 were over 12 inches and 11 were over 15 inches.

"Most of the fish over 12 inches were also over 15 inches," says Lee. "That would tell me we had 23 bass over 12 inches, and 22 of them were also over 15 inches."

The 1992 look-see also turned up excellent results. Even though the total catch rate dropped to 85 bass per hour, the numbers over 12 inches jumped to 26.7 per hour. Numbers over 15 inches were 7.9.

On a broader scale, Crooked Creek's numbers also fare well. Lee says the lake ranks seventh in his district in terms of bass over 15 inches. This is even more impressive when you consider that Lee's district lies primarily in the northwestern portion of the state, and includes some of Pennsylvania's finest largemouth bass water.

The fisheries manager considers the upper two-thirds of the lake to be the best largemouth bass habitat, basically from the point at the swimming beach and uplake. The extreme upper portion of the lake, above the boat launch, has good growth of submergent weeds.

"The biggest bass were right around the point from the boat launch upriver, on that shoreline," Lee says.

Even though most Crooked Creek bass are largemouths, Lee says there are some smallmouths, especially in the lower reaches of the lake, more specifically, below the swimming area. His surveys were targeted more toward largemouths.

"We did not get past the trash boom. I imagine the smallmouth bass fishing would pick up down in that rocky, deeper area," Lee says.

Tactics

Fishing tactics on Crooked Creek are tailored to the shallow, cover-rich waters the largemouths inhabit. The upper lake, which has big mats of weeds by the onset of summer, provides plenty of opportunity for using fast, weedless presentations. Working "rats" over these weed mats and over pockets of surrounding open water, is a proven tactic.

Plastic worms and jigs are excellent for working the edges of the Crooked Creek channel that winds through the shallows of the lake's upper portion.

Minnow-shaped Rapalas are also effective, particularly on down the lake and away from the thick weedbeds. Another local favorite is a little plug called a "Rocky Junior."

Boating anglers will find the lake's access area at the end of Robb's Fording Road. Use caution when navigating uplake of the launch, because much of this water is shallow and weed-choked. Remember also that Corps of Engineers lakes have a PFD policy that requires boaters to wear flotation devices while on boats under 16 feet in length. There are no horsepower restrictions on Crooked Creek, although there are extensive no-wake zones.

Shorefishing is somewhat limited. Much of the lake is away from any roads. The shoreline can be reached at the boat launch and swimming areas. The Corps has provided excellent shorefishing facilities in the tailrace area. The predominant species include walleyes, sauger, crappies, white bass, smallmouth bass and the occasional musky.

Lake level and recreational information for the waterway is provided by a hotline number, 412-763-2764. To speak with someone from the park office, phone 412-763-3161.

More Crooked Creek Opportunities

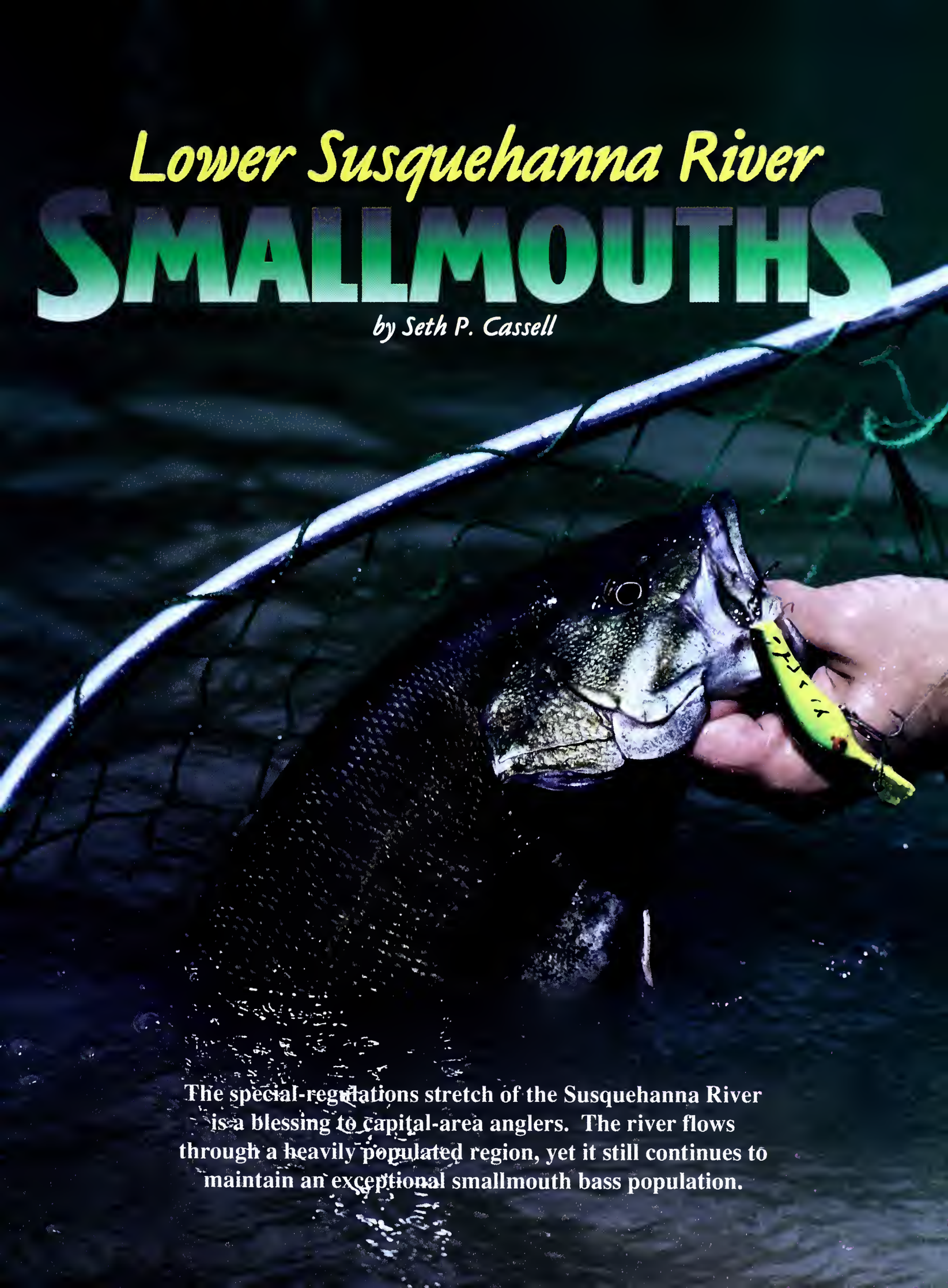
In addition to the fishing, Crooked Creek Lake offers a wide variety of recreational options. A campground is operated by the Corps, and provides about 40 campsites for both tents and trailers. If you're interested in camping but would like to give it a try without laying out the cash necessary to purchase all the equipment, it can be rented from the park. Phone for the details.

An environmental center is available, as are hiking trails and picnic areas. The swimming area is quite popular during the summer months.

Wintertime activities include a cross-country ski trail, sled-riding area, and an ice-skating rink. A brochure and map that explains the specifics is available from Crooked Creek Lake's park office.–*JK*.

Lower Susquehanna River SMALLMOUTHS

by Seth P. Cassell



The special-regulations stretch of the Susquehanna River is a blessing to capital-area anglers. The river flows through a heavily populated region, yet it still continues to maintain an exceptional smallmouth bass population.

Lower Susquehanna River SMALLMOUTHS



The "Big Bass" section of the Susquehanna extends from the Dock Street Dam in Harrisburg downstream to the Holtwood Dam. Within this stretch of excellent smallmouth bass habitat there are four dams including, Dock Street, York Haven, Safe Harbor and Holtwood. This section also includes three impoundments–Lake Frederic, Lake Clarke and Lake Aldred. According to Larry Jackson, Commission Area 7 Fisheries Manager, the special regulations were implemented in January 1991, and were intended to improve and diversify an already adequate smallmouth bass fishery.

"The special regulations stretch is exceptional smallmouth bass water, and we found it to be an area that can support large fish," Jackson says. "The special regulations stretch of the Susquehanna River ranks up there with other top smallmouth waters in Pennsylvania.

"Our survey sites, below Dock Street and at the Turnpike Bridge, have always been exceptional habitat for smallmouth bass, featuring shelf rock and rock out-crops. Most of the area from Dock Street Dam to York Haven Dam is exceptional water."

Jackson commented on the future of the special regulations stretch and plans on extending the area. "It is a little too early to tell. We have not been able to calculate the angler reception of the new regulations. The special regulations have only been in effect since January 1991, and that is not a very long time for a reproducing species. Some of the fish were born under the special regulations, and their generations have not yet reached beyond the 15-inch minimum size."

"Concerning our electrofishing results, the average size of the smallmouth bass we usually catch is in the range of 10 to 14 inches. The largest fish we usually catch during the surveys are around the 20-inch mark." Jackson notes that there are fish larger than 20 inches in the river, but they do not always show up in the electrofishing results.

Mike Kaufmann, Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager, oversees the special regulations stretch from York Haven Dam downstream to the end of the special regulations area (Holtwood).

"The smallmouth bass population in my management area is good to excellent, depending on the location, because there is varying habitat," says Kaufmann. "Where there is good habitat, there is an excellent population. In the areas of the impoundments, the populations are relatively sparse because these areas are slow-moving and have silted in over the years."

Kaufmann suggests anglers concentrate on rocky shorelines and ignore shorelines that do not have a lot of rocks. When the river is low and clear and you can actually see what the substrate looks like, steer away from barren areas.

"There are population peaks in smallmouth bass sizes of four to five inches, eight to nine inches, and 11 to 12 inches," says Kaufmann. A population peak is a term used to describe a certain size-group of fish that is greater in number than surrounding groups. "The largest smallmouth bass we have surveyed in the lower special regulations area in recent years was 16 inches long."

Kaufmann agrees with Jackson that electrofishing surveys do not always produce the largest fish. "The upper half of the special regulation water seems to produce larger smallmouths than my management area," Kaufmann says. "That is not to say that there are not big fish in my area, but I have a strong suspicion that the density of larger fish is much lower in my management area."

When asked about the smallmouth bass response to the new regulations, Kaufmann agreed with Jackson, saying, "the jury is still out. From the angler's view, the bass response has been very favorable in producing more fish in the 12- and 14-inch range. It is too early to tell whether the regulations are going to produce more fish over 15 inches, but that question should be answered sometime during the fall of 1994.

"From a biologist's standpoint, it is just too early to tell. It looks like the regulations worked, but there is a possibility, however, that the healthy population of bass in the 12- to 14-inch range would have occurred without the 15-inch size limit. The reason is that we are looking at the effects of good years of reproduction in producing larger fish. The question is, would good years of reproduction produce just as many 12-inch to 14-inch fish in a 12-inch size limit, than it has with a 15-inch size limit?

"We need to study years with good and poor reproduction, and compare the response of bass in the separate population groups. Until we know this, we will not be able to gauge the response accurately of the overall smallmouth bass population to the special regulations."

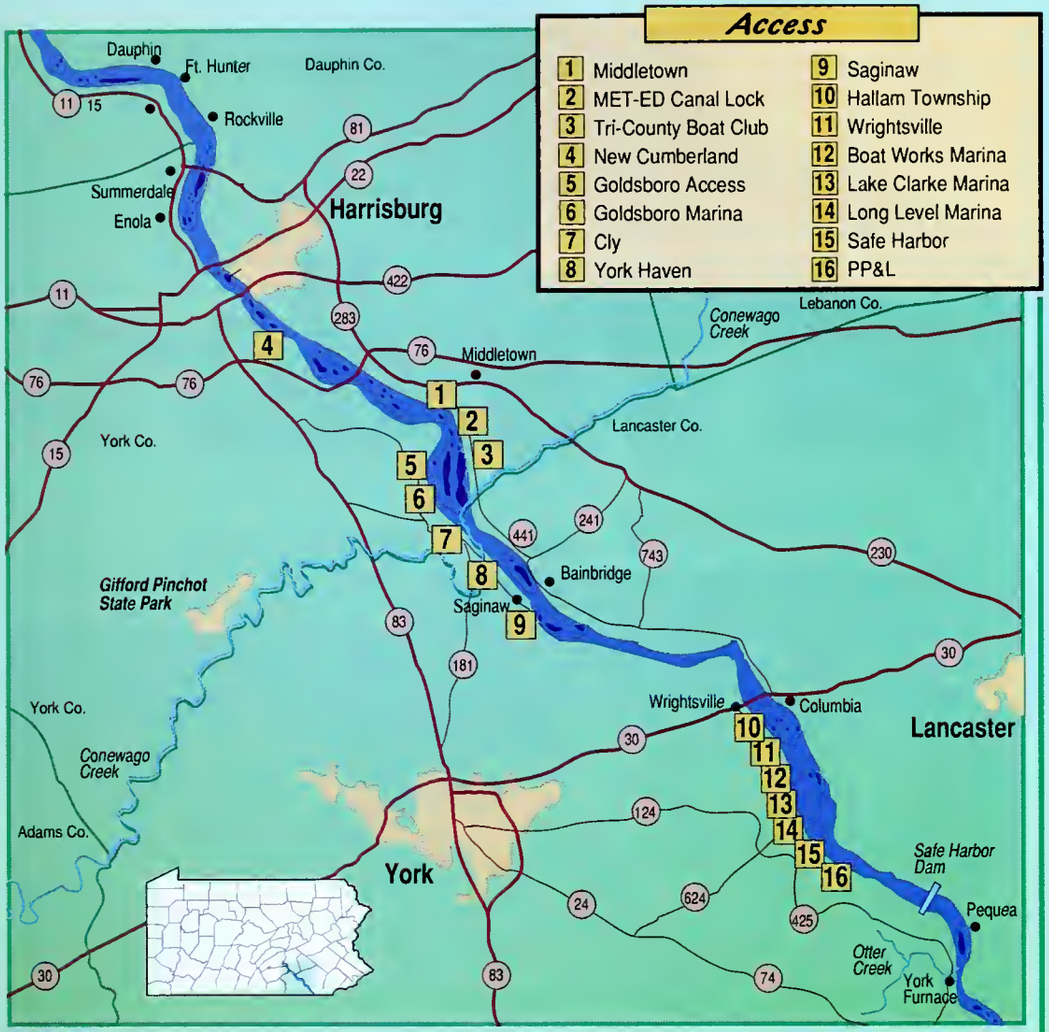
Bob D'Angelo, an outdoor writer, fly fishes for smallmouth bass in the lower portions of the special regulations stretch. "I like to fish in the vicinity of the Holtwood Dam and Lake Aldred," says D'Angelo. "This is where I catch most of my smallmouth bass."

D'Angelo is a dyed-in-the-wool fly fisherman. "My favorite fly to use on the Susquehanna River is the Muddler Minnow, especially when the water is clouded. I think the reason why the Muddler Minnow produces so well is because it resembles a crayfish. Another pattern I like to fish that imitates a crayfish is a Buckskin Crayfish."

D'Angelo also likes to fish on top. "When fishing topwater on the river, poppers in white and green produce best for me," he says.

D'Angelo also commented on the ideal fishing conditions for the Susquehanna River. "When the weather is right, the fishing can be absolutely fabulous. The ideal day for smallmouth bass fishing is on an overcast day. That is when I tie on

photo-Doug Stamm



a Muddler Minnow," he says.

D'Angelo likes to use an 8-foot fly rod with 6-weight line when fishing for bass in the lower Susquehanna, although many fly rodders who work poppers swear by 9-foot rods for 9-weight line. He does not fish from a boat. He wades. He warns, however, to be careful when wading and to watch out for holes.

Bill Gross, public relations manager for GPU's Three Mile Island nuclear plant, has lived in the Harrisburg area all his life and has fished the upper end of the special regulations area since he was a kid. "I like to fish from the Turnpike Bridge downstream to Harrisburg International Airport. That is where I catch most of my smallmouth bass. Another good spot is what is known as the Middletown Rapids. This area is near the Met-Ed Canal Lock Access, just below the mouth of Swatara Creek. It's a great place to wade, and a lot of bass hold in the area during the summer. The Middletown Rapids, however, can be fished only by wading or from a canoe. The area is not suitable for motorboats," Gross says.

Gross likes to fish with artificials during the summer. "I like to use surface plugs and fish where I see rise forms," he says. "When the fish are not feeding on top, I go with the more deep-running plugs and jigs. As far as color is concerned, for jigs, I find that purple and chartreuse are effective. I also like to use rattle traps and Big Os."

In August, Gross likes to use and recommends ultralight spinning gear with 4- to 6-pound-test line. Gross does not confine himself just to spinfishing because he also enjoys flyfishing with poppers in the summer.

Gross believes the special regulations have indeed benefited the smallmouth bass fishing. "I think the special regulations have been very effective, because I notice that the smallmouth bass, on average, are bigger than what I used to catch. The fish are definitely getting more size to them," Gross says.

The Susquehanna River meets the needs of many kinds of fishermen. Anglers can zip around in the impoundments with their high-powered boats, or wade out along the banks in sneakers and a swim suit.

Before implementation of the "special regulations" in 1991, bass fisherman could take six bass daily at 10 inches during the regular bass season. Currently, the 1994 special regulations, or otherwise known as the "Big Bass Program," are as follows: From Dock Street Dam to Holtwood Dam, anglers can take four bass a day, 15 inches minimum size. The season closes April 16, 1994, and opens on June 18, 1994.

Access

Dauphin County

1. Middletown Access (PFBC)–Located at the foot of Union Street in Middletown, where Swatara Creek enters the Susquehanna River.

2. MET-ED Canal Lock Access (Metropolitan Edison Company)–Located along Route 441 south of Royalton in the vicinity of the Middletown Rapids.

3. Tri-County Boat Club–Located along Route 441 north of the "north gate" entrance to the Three Mile Island plant.

Cumberland County

4. New Cumberland Boat Club Access–Located at the end of Fifth Street in New Cumberland.

York County

York Haven Dam (Lake Frederic)

5. Goldsboro Access (PFBC)–From I-83 take Route 262 to Goldsboro. Pass through the town square heading due east, cross the railroad tracks turn left.

6. Goldsboro Marina–Located south of Goldsboro. Turn right after crossing the railroad tracks.

7. Cly Public Access–Within borough limits.

8. York Haven Access–South (downstream) side of the mouth of Conewago Creek.

9. Saginaw Access–From Mount Wolf follow Route 929 east 1.5 miles to the village of Saginaw. Access is located through the railroad underpass off Second Street.

10. Hallam Township Access (Hallam Township)–Take Route 462 east from York a quarter-mile past the borough of Hallam. Turn left (north) on Accomac Road. Go approximately three miles, and turn right (south) on South River Drive for approximately 2/10-mile. Suitable only for small boats.

Safe Harbor Dam (Lake Clarke)

11. Wrightsville Access (PFBC)–At Wrightsville along Route 624, approximately 100 yards below the Route 462 bridge. Suitable only for small boats.

12. Boat Works Marina–From Wrightsville, turn right (south) on Route 624. Drive approximately three miles and turn left on Boat House Road.

13. Lake Clarke Marina–Approximately 1/10-mile south of Boat Works Marina.

14. Long Level Marina–From Wrightsville turn right (south) on Rt. 624. Go approximately 4.5 miles to the marina at the mouth of Cabin Creek.

15. Safe Harbor Water and Power Company–From Wrightsville turn right (south) on Rt. 624; go approximately five miles to where Rt. 624 turns to the right. Do not make the turn, but continue straight for 0.5 mile.

Holtwood Dam (Lake Aldred)

16. PP&L Access Areas–(a) York Furnace Access at the mouth of Otter Creek. Take Route 74 south from Red Lion to Route 425. Turn left (east) on Route 425 for about 4.3 miles to the access area on the right. (b) Access near York Furnace at Indian Steps. Take Route 74 south from Red Lion to Route 425 to the access area.

map graphics-Ted Walke

Tailored Trailers

by Darl Black



photos-Darl Black

"If you stick that 7-inch hot-pink worm on that chartreuse skirted spinnerbait, I'll have to put you out on the dock," I chided Marilyn. "No one in this boat is going to fish that awful looking combination! You'll spook every bass for a half-mile."

My wife ignored the comment and began casting the funny combo over the weedbed. One hour later she had put the only three bass in the boat, and I was busy digging in my box for the same color. As I rigged the trailer, I wondered if the bass had been stimulated by the color, size, rippling action or simple curiosity about that pink worm on the spinnerbait.

Why trailers?

Some anglers use lure trailers without any particular reason other than having observed someone else do it. Other anglers have very specific reasons for trailer combinations. Those who give some thought to the use of trailers are generally more successful.

To gain a better understanding of lure trailers, I consulted several accomplished fishing acquaintances. First, in their opinion, what constitutes a lure trailer?

"Any piece of plastic or pork attached to a lure for added action or body," says Jeff Reichel.

Cliff Butcher says, "Anything such as pork or plastic attached to an original bait."

"Pork or plastic that adds bulk to a lure or increases the profile," says Tom Anderson.

From their responses, it's apparent that pork baits and soft plastic make up the majority of lure trailers. But what is the decision process of selecting a trailer?

Further discussion revealed perhaps six justifications for trailers—as a teaser, to add color to a lure, to increase the weight of a bait, to change the profile or size of a lure, to balance a lure either physically or visually, and to slow the fall of a lure. Rarely does the use of a trailer fit neatly into one category. Usually a trailer bridges two or more categories.

Teaser

First, let's examine the teaser aspect. A trailer may be selected to make a lure more attractive by providing an enticing action. Curiosity factors are included here, too. Some fish species strike something unusual or unrecognizable to identify it.

"I use a ribbon-tail worm on my flipping jig when fishing around docks," says Anderson. "I want a trailer that appears to give life to the jig even if there is very little forward movement. Any time you are faced with a limited strike zone, such as dock fishing, it's important to use a trailer that has the illusion of movement even if the bait is barely moving. In my book, that trailer would be exhibiting an enticement factor."

"I would not throw a spinnerbait without a twin-tail teaser," says Butcher. "The vibration from the blade causes the tail to dance just enough to entice a strike from neutral active fish."

Another reason for using a trailer is to contrast or complement the color of the lure. Determining if certain colors increase strikes can lead to an exhaustive debate. Anglers struggle every day to find that best color. Most serious anglers argue that fine-tuning a lure presentation through color can make a big difference in their success.

"In murky water, I want contrasting color to increase the lure's visibility," says Anderson. "A personal favorite is using a chartreuse and blue pork frog on a black jig. However, in clear water, I want natural, complementary colors. For clear water I fish a brown frog on a brown jig. It's more natural without a bold contrast."

Yet, choice of a trailer's color can be simple, too, according to Butcher. "On spinnerbaits, I use one of two colors–white for clear water and chartreuse for dingy water."

Size, profile

Next, is the size or profile aspect. By adding a certain trailer, the lure may appear larger. Butcher points out that increasing the size of a bait may be important for making the lure more visible in dingy or muddy water.

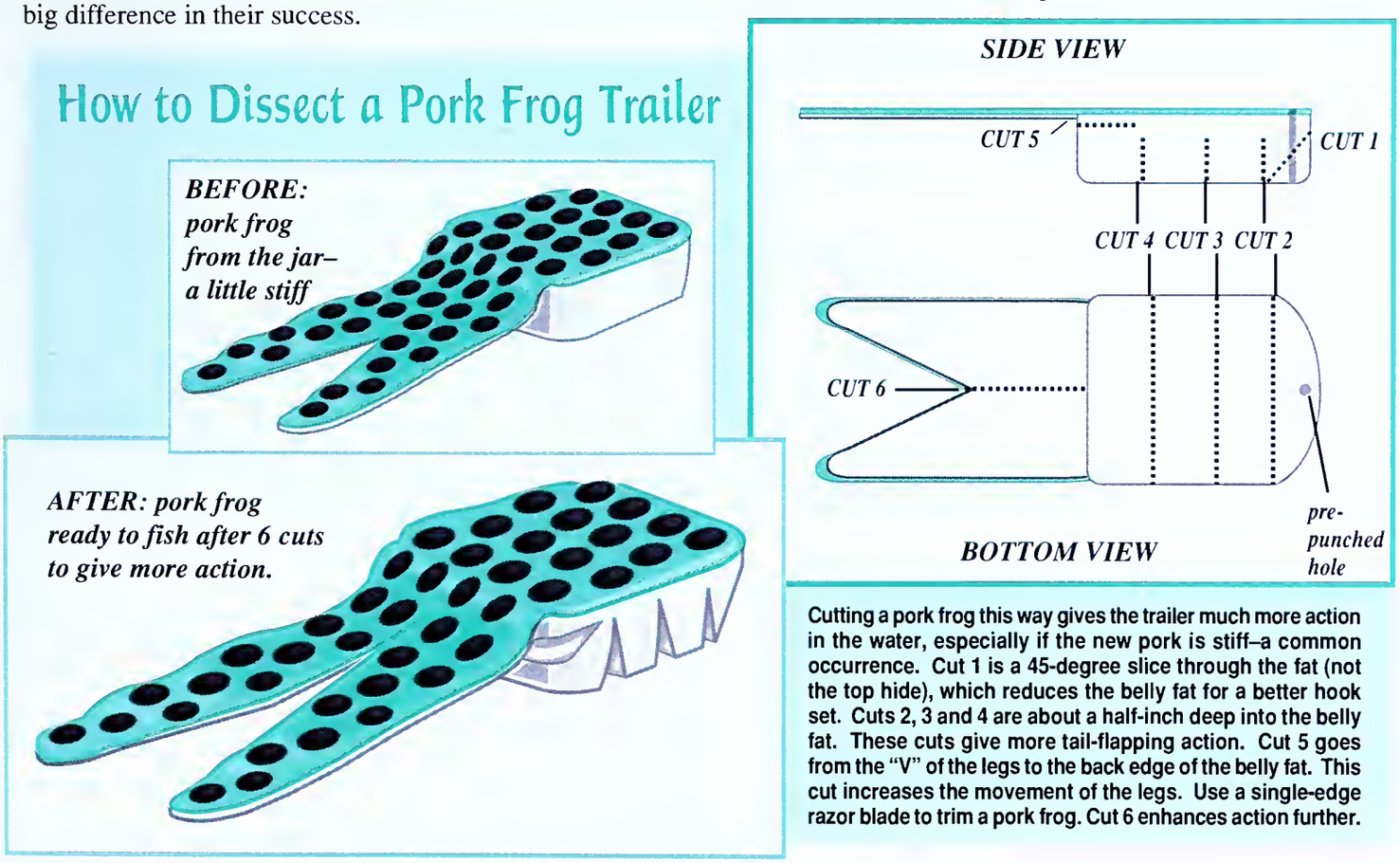
"Other times, the desired fish species may be targeting a larger size baitfish, particularly late summer or into the fall when forage has grown," says Butcher. "Therefore, altering the profile with a trailer may increase the likelihood of strikes."

Weight, balance

Another justification for a trailer is to increase the weight of the lure, thereby making it easier to cast.

"I am sure every angler has experienced difficulty in casting hollow-plastic Rats and Scum Frogs used for fishing heavy surface vegetation," says Reichel. "I like to stick a plastic grub or piece of plastic worm on the hook. Not only does it add weight, but it gives additional attraction."

A particularly interesting application of a trailer is to balance a lure. The example given by all three anglers was a weedless spoon. Although Jeff and Cliff had fished the spoon without a trailer when they first started fishing years ago, today they agree that a spoon or similar weedless lure seems completely naked without a trailer. A trailer provides visual balance to the lure.



Cutting a pork frog this way gives the trailer much more action in the water, especially if the new pork is stiff–a common occurrence. Cut 1 is a 45-degree slice through the fat (not the top hide), which reduces the belly fat for a better hook set. Cuts 2, 3 and 4 are about a half-inch deep into the belly fat. These cuts give more tail-flapping action. Cut 5 goes from the "V" of the legs to the back edge of the belly fat. This cut increases the movement of the legs. Use a single-edge razor blade to trim a pork frog. Cut 6 enhances action further.

Tailored Trailers



Should you use a plastic trailer or a pork trailer? Better understand their differences before choosing.

Almost overlooked

Interestingly, the examples provided thus far have centered mostly on flipping jigs, spinnerbaits and weedless spoons. But trailers can be used on other lures, too.

I would never consider fishing a buzzbait without a trailer. Usually I select a plastic double tail. The trailer provides some enticing action, increases the profile of the bait, and adds bulk or buoyancy to help keep it on top at slow speeds.

No one mentioned a little ace-in-the-hole trailer trick I have used. It was something I read about years ago, but have seen very few anglers use. Sometimes I run a two-inch grub on the treble hook of a crankbait.

The trailer is not placed on the tail treble, but on the belly treble. I cannot recall who to credit with this idea, but I do remember the explanation. According to the author, it made the crankbait appear as a small fish swimming off with a struggling minnow, thereby triggering the competitive instinct of a larger gamefish.

You can believe the explanation or not. Either way, this falls into the "teaser" category.

The first time I tried this crankbait trailer more than a dozen years ago I caught several bass while my partner managed only one. We were using the same bait—the only difference was the grub. I used it so infrequently, I forgot about it. After all, did a crankbait really need any additional attraction?

But I revived it several years ago with a new twist when my wife started putting liquid scent on all lures, including crankbaits. "It's messy and a waste of good scent," I would tell her. "It

Pennsylvania ANGLER

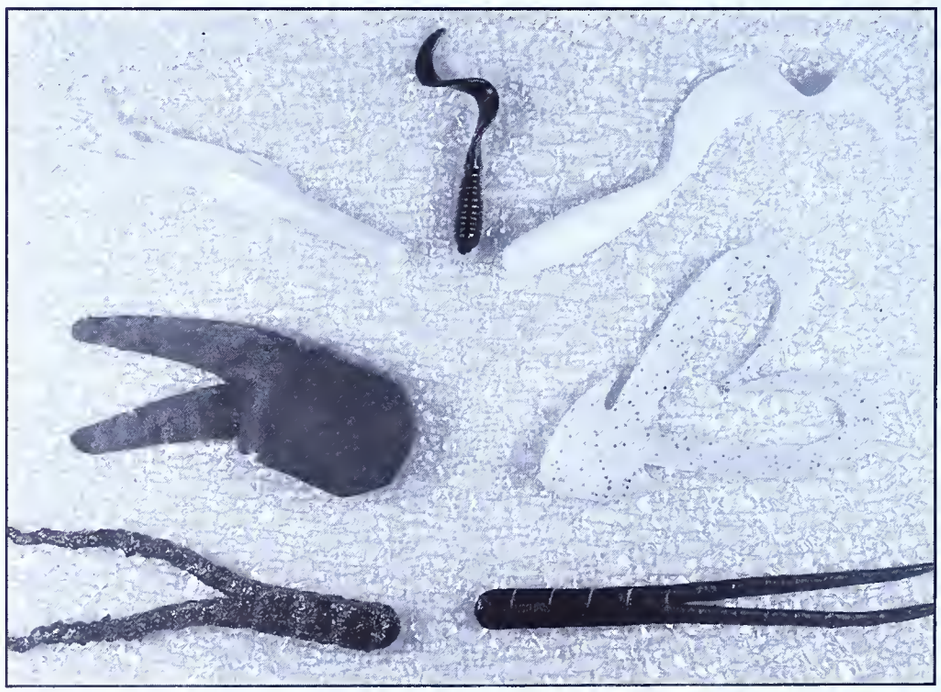
In addition, Reichel points to the use of a trailer to balance a lure physically. "I use a straight twin-tail trailer only on a spinnerbait, never a grub. If you observe a spinnerbait carefully, you realize a grub makes a spinnerbait run off to the side. In part, this is because it is difficult to get the fat body of the grub aligned properly on the hook. The off-center grub acts as a rudder to push the bait left or right. On the other hand, a twin tail just undulates up and down. It does not alter the path of the lure."

Slowing the fall

For many anglers, slowing the fall of a lure is the most important justification for a trailer. Reichel and Anderson were extremely adamant about how trailers can affect the drop rate.

"I believe a trailer designed to slow the fall of a bait is the most important reason for sticking something on the primary lure," says Anderson. "I cannot stress enough the need to keep a lure, especially a flipping jig, in the strike zone for as long as possible. You do this by bulking up the bait so there is resistance as it drops."

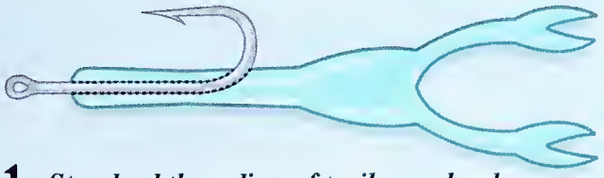
Reichel says that for him, water temperature is the determining factor as to how fast a bait should fall. "I switch to a bigger trailer in the fall when the water begins to cool. That's when I use a number 1 Jumbo or Big Daddy Frog, rather than a number 11 pork frog."



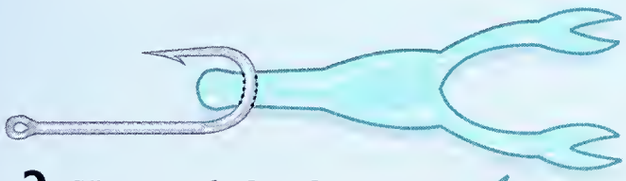
The assortment of pork and plastic trailers is great. Remember that trailers can be used as teasers, to add color to a lure, to increase a bait's weight, to change a lure's profile, to balance a lure either physically or visually, and to slow a lure's fall. Most trailers accomplish more than one of these objectives.

photos-Darl Black

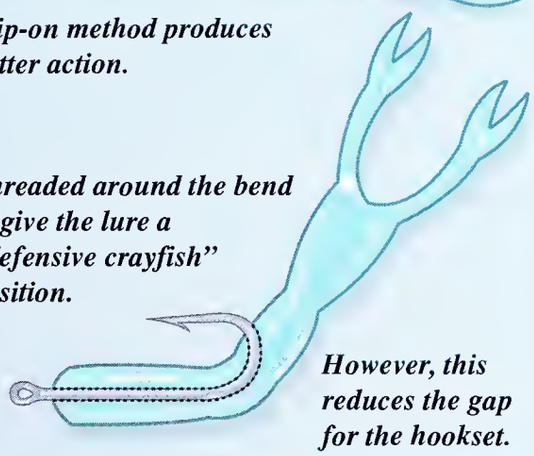
Three Ways to Rig a Plastic Crayfish Trailer



1 *Standard threading of trailer on hook.*



2 *Slip-on method produces better action.*



3 *Threaded around the bend to give the lure a "defensive crayfish" position.*

However, this reduces the gap for the hookset.

washes off in two or three casts." In an attempt to get her to lay off dousing scent on hard baits, I suggested she use a small scented grub on a crankbait. When she tried, she caught fish. Today there are many scented grubs on the market.

Manufacturers have picked up on the concept of building scent into hard baits. New this season are lipless rattle baits with a hard head and a scented soft-plastic tail section. However, by using a scented grub trailer, you can add smell to big-lipped diving baits, too, and be one jump ahead of the lure makers.

Pork or plastic

The debate continues between soft plastic and pork trailers. Are there guidelines for pork and plastic? Is one better than the other?

Just in case the old myth that "plastic trailers get stiff in cold water, while pork trailers remain flexible" is still floating around, let's put it to rest. Today's soft plastic baits are pliable in cold temperatures. This aspect of the pork-versus-plastic argument is no longer applicable.

Reichel has this to say on the pork versus plastic issue. "I rely a lot on pork through the entire season, although I sometimes use plastic in warmer water because it allows the bait to drop quicker. Pork is more buoyant so it is better when a slow fall is needed, primarily in cold water situations. And I use a plastic crayfish on a flipping jig in clear water because it is more natural-looking than a pork chunk."

Anderson expresses this thought. "Almost any situation where a fish has a chance to pick up a bait, I prefer pork because it has that natural salty taste. Plastic is okay on a spinnerbait, which is in constant motion, but if a fish has the opportunity to mouth the bait, I pick a pork trailer."

Of course, pork does have a salty taste, and it tends to hold an applied scent longer than plastic. However, each year more and more manufacturers are offering salt or scent enhancers already in the plastic. I figure within two years, every major soft plastic company will have natural scent cooked into the plastic.

"Plastic trailers are definitely more convenient than pork," says Butcher. "Plastic is less expensive, easier to store, and available in many more colors and shapes than pork."

If a pork trailer is not kept moist during hot weather, it turns into a piece of stiff leather within minutes. Several manufacturers offer a small, wet wrap for a lure rigged with a pork trailer. Or you can simply use a sandwich bag with a little water added, snapping it closed over the bait after the lure has been tied to the end of the line. Other anglers take the approach of using pork if they are constantly fishing a single rod so it stays wet, but go to a plastic trailer if switching among several rigged rods. Both pork and plastic trailers have their place and their devotees. The choice is yours.

Choices. That's the story of trailers. You can choose to use one or not. But when you do use a trailer, think about it. Consider what you wish to achieve with the lure presentation and tailor a trailer based on those needs.

Trailer Hooks

The use of trailers usually brings up the topic of trailer hooks. Referred to as *stinger hooks*, these add-on hooks are intended to snare short-striking fish.

Anderson says he uses a stinger hook if he's using a large trailer on a spinnerbait. It has been his experience that bass are sometimes caught on the stinger hook without getting hooked on the main lure.

I avoid trailer hooks. A stinger hook is likely to snag or collect debris. It interferes with the movement of the trailer, and often times fouls the lure. With very few lure exceptions, I cannot recall actually hooking a fish on a trailer hook alone.

I do use a stinger hook on a buzzbait, the only lure that regularly generates so-called short strikes. For whatever reasons, smallmouth bass sometimes nip at the ends of the buzzbait skirt, missing the main hook entirely. A stinger helps turn near misses into solid hookups.

Also, when fishing wintertime walleyes and saugers in a river, I use a stinger hook on my jigs. This is one of the few times fish that would otherwise be missed are actually hooked on the stinger.–*DB*.

"Each year more and more manufacturers are offering salt or scent enhancers already in the plastic. I figure within two years, every major soft plastic company will have natural scent cooked into the plastic."

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Canoes and Fish

After my first canoe had pretty well rotted away and been junked, I began to realize how light it had been, how quietly it moved and how amateurish I had been with it. I'd barely known what canoes are for and I wished I'd taken better care of it, even though it was the product of someone's experimental shade tree construction and had cost me less than the price of a level-wind reel.

Shortly after that I fished with a man who knew about canoes. He said he could cast a fly better when he stood up–so he stood with one foot on each gunwale and I cowered on my knees, thinking of the deep, cold water beneath me. But the little boat barely rocked and fishing was pretty good–for him. By the time I was able to manage more than a few tentative flop casts, the evening was over.

Upstream poling is an art and science, and despite poling races and poling clubs in some parts of the country, a great many experienced anglers simply don't know about it.

The word "canoeist" covers a lot of territory and I have long made a major division between what I call "wet canoeists" and "dry canocists." "Angling canoeists" is a subdivision of the latter. Juvenile summer campers tend to be very wet canoeists and late-fall musky anglers are generally very dry canoeists. Flotillas of collegians in rented canoes are usually damp.

For some years, automobile manufacturers have been a little unkind to canoes, smoothing out some of the tops canoes used to ride on, but the current recreation rigs and station wagons often come with roof racks that work fine. Canoes have become lighter than ever, of course. Most anglers simply don't make the most of them.

When I first heard of canoe poling I assumed it was used with big freight outfits in back country travel, but when I was invited to drift a stretch of smallmouth river I found my host had no plans for a downstream takeout.

"We'll just go up a piece and drift back," he said, and I visualized hard paddling and probably some chilly wading. Instead, he loaded me on the bottom like inanimatc freight and went to work with a fiberglass pushpole. Upstream poling is an art and science, and despite poling races and poling clubs in some parts of the country, a great many experienced anglers simply don't know about it. The science, of course, is reading the water upstream as carefully as a whitewater traveler reads it downstream. My friend picked the slow-moving parts, slid up through the eddies, and found all the slow sections below the boulders. We went up almost as fast as we came back down. After that, I sneaked off and tried it myself. It wasn't really as hard as it had looked, except that I didn't always pick the right routes. You begin to feel you are *wearing* the canoe.

Canoe shapes haven't changed that much in the past few hundred years, although materials have changed and propulsion is often different. Canoe manufacturers continually explain that a narrow craft wearing less than a hundred pounds should not be overpowered. I cringed when I saw two big fellows in logger boots unload a 13-foot aluminum canoe from their pickup, toss it into the water and fasten a 9 1/2-horse outboard engine to it, being careful that the motor didn't turn it over before they could get aboard. I asked how it worked and one of them said it was fine as long as you "sat easy." They left at frightening speed across a deep, cold lake, and disappeared behind an island. I trust they came back.

Canoe anglers seldom mention it, but there is a feel of tradition when a paddle drives a silent little boat over and through vegetation and across the shallows. Compared to the paddle, an electric motor is a fussy intrusion on nature–and there is a special feel when a hooked fish of modest size tows a canoe and a pair of anglers a little way. Fishing canoeists are not necessarily craft connoisseurs, but I am in awe of the costly handmade canoes made in old ways, with only a little help from modernized tools. Sometimes their owners are purely canoeists, but some fishermen who use them are perfectionists with rods as well as with paddles.

Canoe anglers seldom mention it, but there is a feel of tradition when a paddle drives a silent little boat over and through vegetation and across the shallows.

North Branch CATFISH

by George Smith



North Branch CATFISH



I sweltered in raingear worn against the heavy August deluge that had drenched the little town of Laceyville in Wyoming County that evening. The light of a Coleman lantern illuminated the slippery rocks and water. Bursts of lightning lingered in the distant sky. I was after catfish, big catfish, the kind of hefty channel catfish that bend stiff rods double and strip line from reels spooled with heavy monofilament.

There wasn't much of a wait after a long cast into the Susquehanna River backwater. When line started peeling off the spinning reel, I gently picked up the rod, snapped the bail closed and set the hook aggressively with a powerful, over-the-head yank.

The fish was a good one. It barreled into deep water tugging wildly. It circled the backwater, then lunged toward the swift river current. I battled the channel cat back into calmer water, played it for an honest 15 minutes and finally was able to drag it onto shore. It measured 29 inches and weighed 17 pounds.

Yes, there are huge channel catfish lurking in the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, and they aren't too difficult to catch. Except for the giant flathead cats found primarily in the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, the channel cat is Pennsylvania's largest catfish.

None of the Susquehanna River channel cats I've hooked has approached the weight of the 35-pound, 2 1/2-ounce Pennsylvania state record pulled from the Lehigh Canal in 1991, but one came close.

It was a fish that was hooked, played and brought in to shore upriver from Tunkhannock. It offered one last, wild lunge and snapped the improved clinch knot that connected the size 4 hook to the 12-pound-test monofilament.

That little error–it may have been a hastily tied knot, it may have been abrasions on the line–cost me a trophy that would have approached 30 pounds. In the lantern light that monstrous, whiskered fish looked like it was 40 inches long. Its head appeared to be a foot-and-a-half wide.

Even though 30-pound cats aren't too common in the North Branch, those in the 20-pound range are. And these fish aren't the least bit shy about accepting bait that is properly presented.

It's the bait and the presentation that fool the big cats. All catfish are well-known bottom feeders. They rely on an acute olfactory sense to locate food, and anglers traditionally use all sorts of smelly "stinkbaits" to attract their attention. Every tackle shop has packaged catfish baits that smell like blood or strawberries or vanilla. Some courageous anglers even allow chicken parts or blood-red liver to ripen in a jar for a few days before an outing.

Whenever I'm catfishing in late July or early August, I'm sure to have surface lures in my tackle box. I anticipate the heavy white mayfly hatch and search the backwaters for a pocket of surface activity.

These time-honored baits are indeed effective, but I prefer to follow the advice of anglers who hunt large gamefish exclusively when I pursue Susquehanna River channel cats.

The advice? "Big fish want big baits." And I've added a personal touch to that adage: "Big fish want big baits that are *alive*."

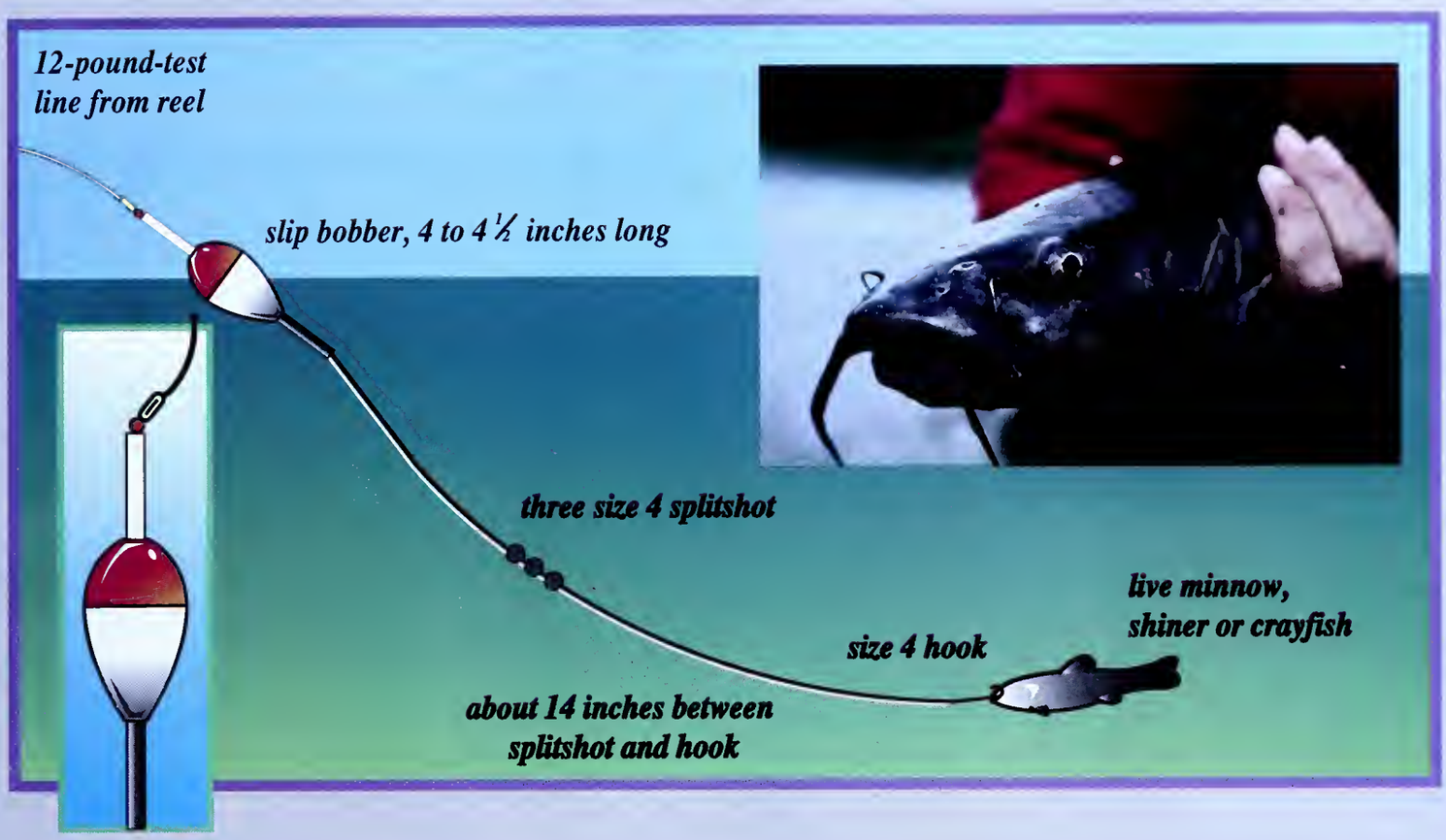
The problem with using live bait in North Branch still-fishing situations is the rocky bottom. Drop live bait into the river and it swims straight for the bottom. The baits dive into rocky nooks and crannies for protection. The catfish can't get at them. You must suspend the baits with a float to keep them off the bottom and to keep them accessible. Using a bobber when catfishing is not an accepted practice, but it's a technique that can result in more cats on the stringer if you're tantalizing the fish with live bait.

Suspending live bait

Keep the live bait swimming no more than six inches off the bottom for the best presentation. Round plastic floats simply won't do. They can't provide any measure of the water's depth.

Use cylindrical slip floats that remain on their sides if there is slack in the line and the bait and sinkers rest on the bottom. Only when the bait is suspended–and there is tension on the line between the bait and bobber–will these cylindrical floats ride upright in a vertical position.

photo-George Smith



It's easy to determine the proper depth. Cast the line and gradually adjust the bobber stop until the cylindrical float rests improperly on its side. Then move the bobber stop six inches down the line toward the terminal tackle. The float should then ride vertically, though marginal adjustments might be necessary to accommodate changes in water depth.

There are cylindrical floats on the market that attach directly to the line, but these pose problems. It's difficult to cast the rig when water depths are greater than the length of the rod, and almost impossible to cast such a float system when fishing in depths greater than 10 feet.

Slip bobbers solve the dilemma. The line "slips" through the float. The bobber stop blocks the slippage and keeps the bait suspended at the proper depth.

The bobber can be reeled right up to the tip of the rod, so you end up casting no more than about 18 inches of line regardless of the depth you're fishing.

I have used both Thill Gold Medal and Eagle Claw slip floats with excellent results. The Thill floats measure 4 1/4 inches long; the Eagle Claw floats are four inches long. Check bait and tackle shops for these items.

I add three size 4 splitshot to the line side-by-side about 14 inches above the hook for weight and to balance the float when using medium shiners as bait. Removable splitshot with "ears" seem to cause tangles. Perfectly round weights are best.

Spring and knot-type bobber stops seem to possess all sorts of gremlins that interfere with fishing. I use stops that resemble a tiny, soft bead. Select the correct stop for the diameter of the line.

Catfish lairs

Channel cats prefer sprawling rivers with swift currents, and they routinely inhabit areas where deep current washes over rocks and boulders. The North Branch of the Susquehanna provides perfect habitat for these big, whiskered fish. Avoid the swiftest stretches of river when using a slip bobber system because repeated casts will be necessary as the rig is carried away with the current.

Fish backwaters with a modest, circling current. If the backwater has a really deep access to the main river, so much the better.

If you're willing to make repeated casts rather than still fish, explore deep but gentle runs that pour into the long pools that are so common on the North Branch.

Channel cats can be taken throughout the day, but the largest are active after sunset. In the evening and at night, these really big, prowling cats move from mid-river lairs to backwaters in their hunt for food. Find backwaters with modest but steady current and you're almost assured of fishing where channel cats abound.

Tackle

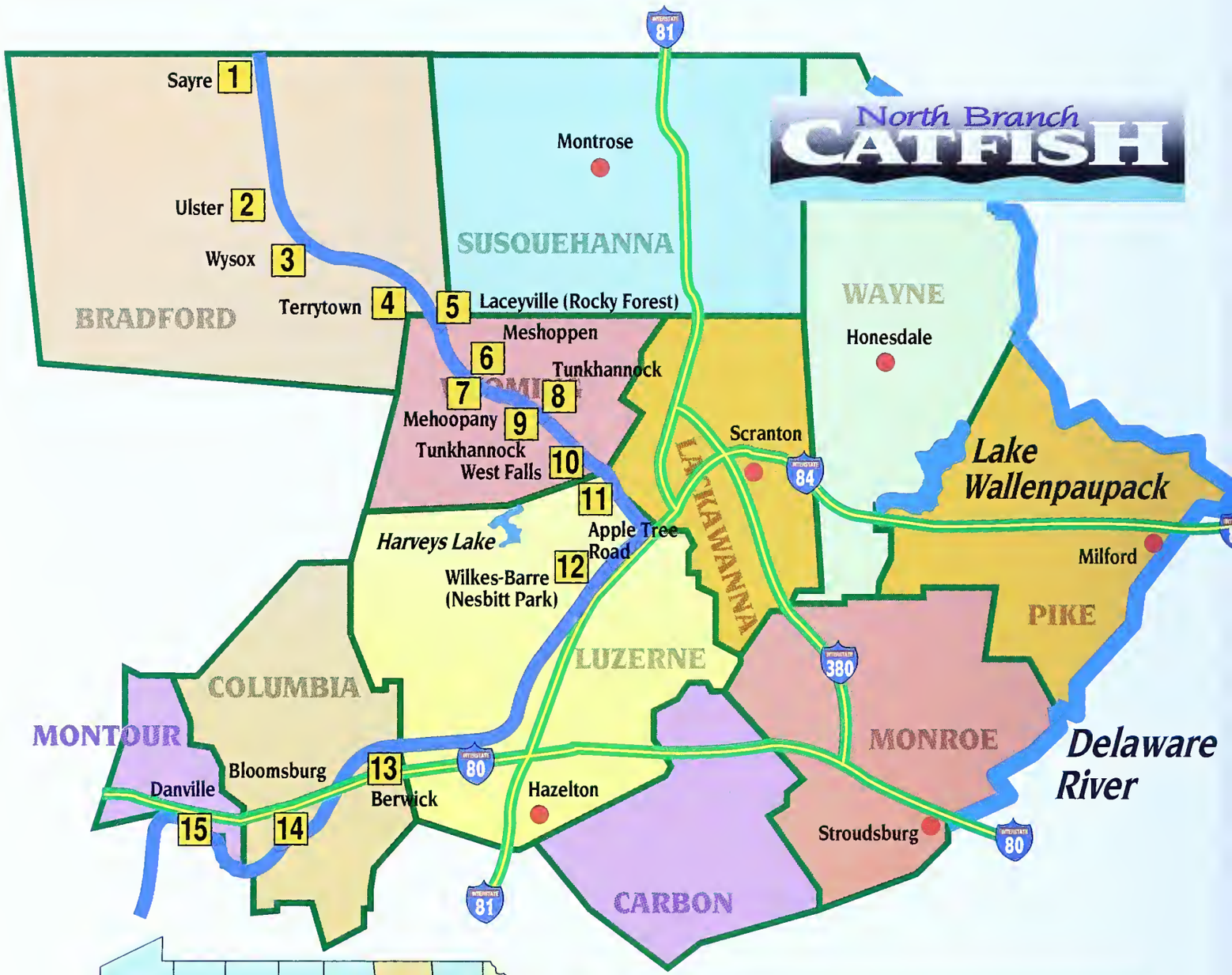
There are some impressive channel catfish swimming in the Susquehanna River, and anglers should use heavy tackle to land them. These big fish are tough to net with anything less than 8-pound-test line, a quality spinning or baitcasting reel equipped with a smooth drag, and a rod with backbone. Use a sturdy rod at least six feet long to improve casting distance. Both rods I use for big cats are seven-footers, and there are times when I truly appreciate their added length.

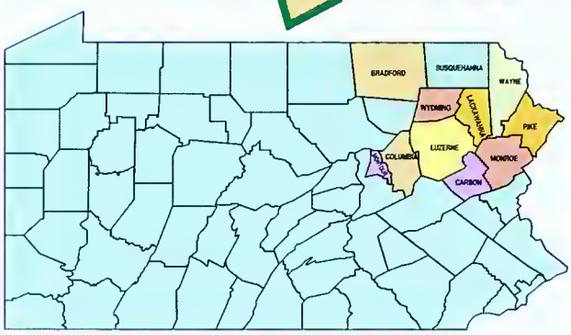
North Branch channel cats hold an advantage over fish in impoundments: They can charge into the Susquehanna's swift current when hooked. The river's current–along with the fish's weight–can easily snap the line if the drag is set tightly or if the line becomes snarled in the reel.

Channel cats can be taken with nightwalkers and stinkbaits, but the largest respond especially well to live baits. Minnows and shiners are a favored food, but don't rule out crayfish as prime bait. Crayfish are common in the North Branch, and it's always wise to use a bait that gamefish are accustomed to eating.

Fishing with bobbers is not customary when catfishing. It may seem to be a radical departure from the norm. But by using slip floats and live baits, anglers can improve their odds of attracting the larger whiskered fish that cruise the Susquehanna's rocky depths.

photo-George Smith; graphics-Ted Walke





Yes, *there are huge channel catfish lurking in the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, and they aren't too difficult to catch.*

North Branch Access

1. Fish and Boat Commission Sayre Access.
2. Ulster River Bridge access.
3. Fish and Boat Commission Wysox Access.
4. Fish and Boat Commission Terrytown Access.
5. Rocky Forest.
6. Meshoppen Access.
7. Mehoopany primitive access.
8. Tunkhannock Borough Access.
9. Fish and Boat Commission Tunkhannock Access.
10. Fish and Boat Commission West Falls Access.
11. Fish and Boat Commission's Appletree Access.
12. Nesbitt Park.
13. Berwick Boat Ramp.
14. Bloomsburg VFW Landing.
15. Fish and Boat Commission Danville Access.

map graphics-Ted Walke

North Branch Access

The North Branch of the Susquehanna dips into Pennsylvania for the second time at Sayre, Bradford County, and pours through more than 200 miles of Keystone State mountains, forests and fields before merging with the river's West Branch near Sunbury, just southwest of Danville. Anglers can take advantage of 15 recognized access points between Sayre and Danville. At each of these sites, shore anglers can find good fishing or anglers can launch watercraft for trips up or downriver.

The Fish and Boat Commission Sayre Access near Sayre is located off Route 220, west of the small town of East Athens.

At Ulster, the Ulster River Bridge access is located southeast of town, on Route 220. There is limited parking available, a boat ramp and a picnic area.

The Fish and Boat Commission Wysox Access is on Route 6, two miles south of Towanda. There is a large parking area and a boat ramp.

The Fish and Boat Commission Terrytown Access is located on Route 187, on the west side of the river between Wyalusing and Terrytown. Parking and a boat ramp are available.

A primitive site at Laceyville called Rocky Forest can be found beneath the bridge on the east side of the river.

The primitive, tough-to-find Meshoppen Access site at Meshoppen is located off Route 6.

The Mehoopany primitive access is located on the west side of the river, off Route 87.

There are two access sites at Tunkhannock. Both offer easy routes to the water. One, the Tunkhannock Borough Access, is on the east side of the river in a town park just upriver from the Route 29 bridge. Another launch, owned by the Fish and Boat Commission, is downriver from the bridge on the west side of the river.

There is lots of parking and easy access to the water at the Commission West Falls Access downriver from the West Falls Bridge, off Route 92.

The Fish and Boat Commission's Appletree Access is located at the intersection of Route 92 and Apple Tree Road.

The site at Wilkes-Barre is in the refurbished Nesbitt Park, beneath the Market Street Bridge. There is ample parking, a boat launch and wide-open space to picnic beneath tall shade trees.

The site located near Berwick is the Berwick Boat Ramp. It can be found at Tank Test Park on the Susquehanna's west side.

The Bloomsburg VFW Landing is located near a pastoral town park off Route 11. There is limited parking, a boat launch and lots of space to picnic.

Located just southeast of town, the Commission Danville Access has a large parking area, a boat launch and picnic sites. It's located a half-mile east of Danville on Route 2006.

Most of the accesses are well-marked, but a few are secluded and can be difficult to find. If possible, scout each area before buying a bucket full of bait and trailering a boat to the site.

These sites offer access to stretches of river where channel cats abound, but there are other areas that can be productive. Any bridge spanning the river or field bordering the water can provide a path to the North Branch and an easy means to enjoy some fine bank fishing.–*GS*.

White Fly Wonder

I thought they were carp. The big fish were splashing and swirling madly in the darkness as I watched from the downriver end of a tiny island in the Susquehanna's North Branch. I was after channel catfish, but the fat nightwalkers I was using were attracting little attention. The only action came from the extraordinary white mayfly hatch. The mayflies were everywhere. They started massing in the sky as soon as it became necessary to put a match to the lantern.

By 9:30 p.m. my cap and jacket were covered with the white bugs. The water was blanketed with spent white mayflies. The backwater I was fishing looked as if it was cloaked with confetti. And the fish I thought were carp continued their splashy antics. The school appeared to hold about 30 fish.

Then I noticed something odd. A flow of river some 20 feet across fed the backwater. The flow was slow and shallow until it poured into the deep, murky pool. The change in water depth was abrupt, and there were so many spent mayflies in the current that they looked like a long white ribbon. I realized the "carp" just happened to be facing the current and the steady stream of spent mayflies.

The nightwalkers were unproductive, so I tied a four-inch jointed surface minnow to my line. Then I cast beyond the splashing school of fish and started the retrieve. A heavy, powerful fish smashed the lure. It started pulling line off the reel immediately as it barreled to the bottom of the pool.

I lost that fish, but several casts later another fish struck. The fight was the same. The fish shot to the bottom of the backwater and swam in slow circles as I desperately fought to take in line. This fish didn't break free, and I was shocked when I finally maneuvered it into the lantern light: It was a huge channel catfish with a great whiskered head, greenish back and slate-gray sides.

At home, before I filleted it, the channel cat measured out at 30 inches. Its eyes were 5 1/2 inches distant. Its forked tail was seven inches from point to point. When I opened the fish's stomach it was packed solid with mayflies.

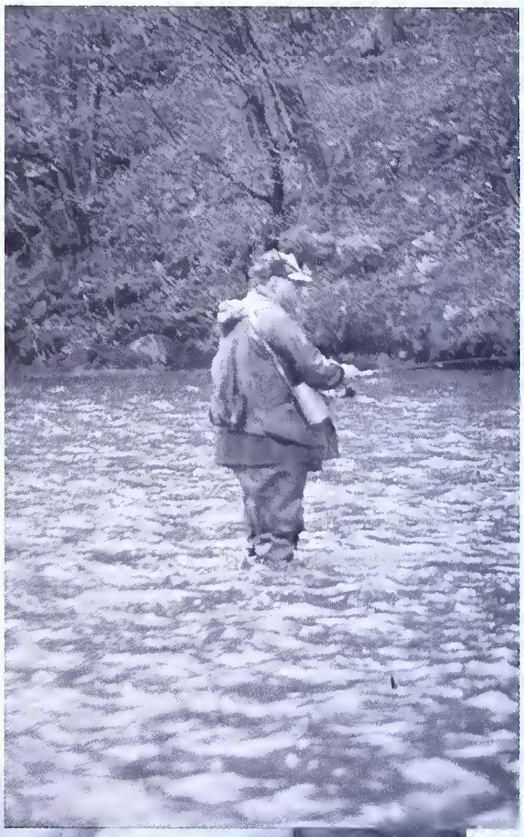
Smallmouth bass anglers who fish with fly rods anticipate this extraordinary, annual white mayfly hatch on the Susquehanna's North Branch. It starts in mid-July near Danville and reaches Wilkes-Barre around July 25. By August 1, the flies begin hatching near Tunkhannock and points upriver. Smallmouths gorge down these white mayflies, and on that night–July 29–I discovered that channel cats also take advantage of the heavy hatch.

I kept casting at the swirling school of fish until the hatch ended completely around 11 p.m. and the current carried away the spent mayflies. I must have hooked and fought 20 channel cats in the two-hour period that the mayflies remained active. The catfish stopped feeding on the surface as soon as the hatch ended. They could not be coaxed out of hiding with lures, and they showed no interest in nightwalkers. Only when the mayflies flowed heavily into the backwater could the catfish be cajoled into hitting lures.

If I hadn't experienced this first-hand, I'd be skeptical. Monstrous catfish feeding on the surface? On mayflies? Unbelievable but true. The minnow-like lure was a good imitation. Big cats take big minnows and shiners. The jointed plug attracted the fish's interest while they were in a feeding frenzy.

Whenever I'm catfishing in late July or early August, I'm sure to have surface lures in my tackle box. I anticipate the heavy white mayfly hatch and search the backwaters for a pocket of surface activity. I know I can catch catfish when this heavy hatch is on. Someday I may even tie number 12 or 14 White Wulffs and have a go at them with a fly rod.–*GS*.

Red Bank Creek

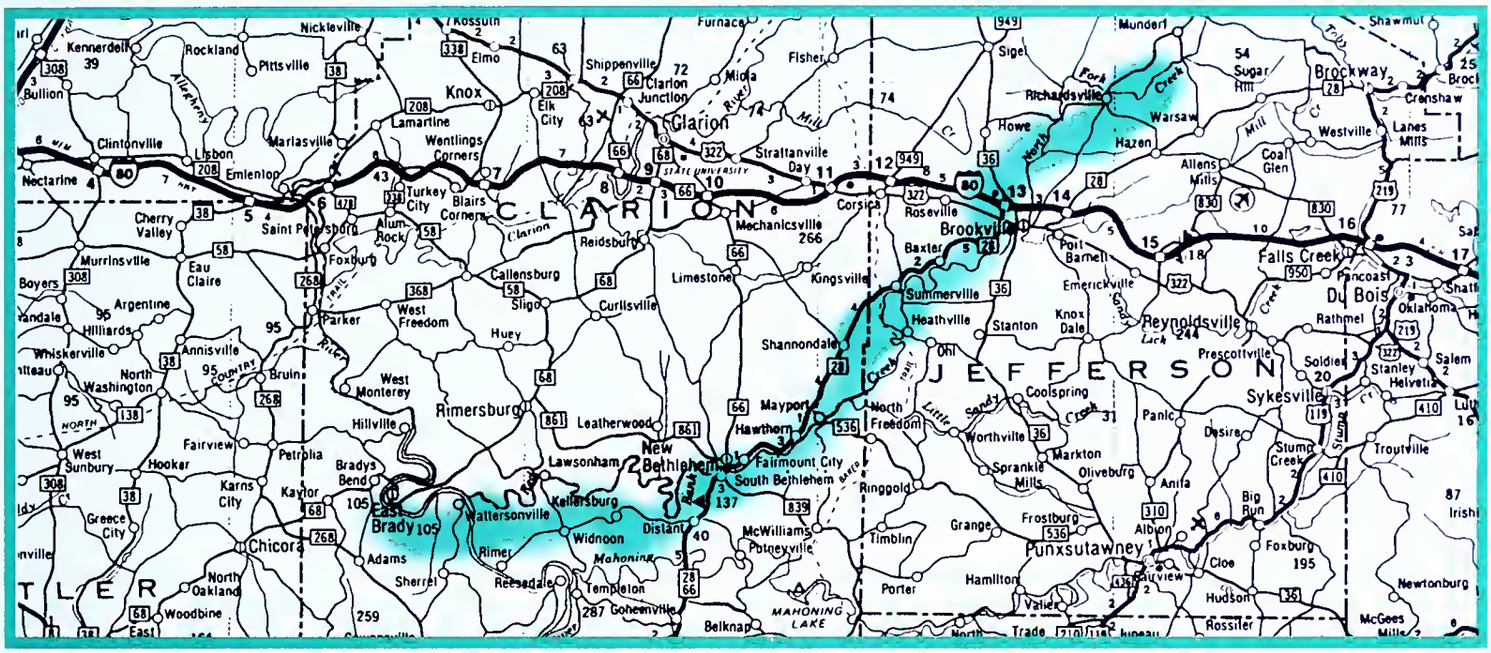


by Bob Petri



photo-Dick Mermon

Red Bank Creek offers diverse and excellent warmwater fishing in its middle and lower reaches, and good trout fishing in the upper portion of the main stem and in many of the stream's numerous coldwater tributaries.


CLARION
JEFFERSON
TLER
Clarion
Knox
Brookville
Reynoldsville
Du Bois
Falls Creek
Sykesville
Punxsutawney
Rimersburg
Brady
Chicora
Summerville
Corsica
Sligo
Callensburg
Curllsville
Limestone
Kingsville
Shannondale
Mayport
Hawthorn
Fairmount City
South Bethlehem
New Bethlehem
Lawsonham
Kellersburg
Wattersonville
Distant
Widnoon
Rimer
Reesedale
Templeton
Gobbinsville
Belknap
MAHONING LAKE
Porter
Timblin
McWilliams
Putneyville
Frostburg
Grange
Hamilton
Valier
Sprankle Mills
Oliveburg
Markton
Worthville
Coolspring
Panic
Desire
Troutville
Prescottville
Soldier
Salem
Helvetia
Stanley
Rathmel
Oklahoma
Pancoast
Summerville
Heathville
Stanton
Knox Dale
Emerickville
Baxter
Roseville
Mechanicsville
Reidsburg
Huey
West Freedom
West Monterey
Hillville
Leatherwood
North Freedom
Ringgold
Anita
Albion
Cloe
Foxburg
Hudson
Rossiter
Newtonburg
McGees Mills
Trade
Valier
Porter
Belknap
Templeton
Gobbinsville
Sheffield
Tionesta
Nebraska
Tidioute
Warren
Youngsville
Sugar Grove
Irvine
Clarendon
Sheffield
Tionesta
Nebraska
Tidioute
Warren
Youngsville
Sugar Grove
Irvine
Clarendon
Nicklevile
Kennerdell
Rockland
Pittsville
Bullion
Clintonville
Lisbon
Emlenton
Nectarine
Cherry Valley
Saint Petersburg
Foxburg
Eau Claire
Murrinsville
Boyers
Argentine
Hilliards
Whiskerville
Annisville
North Washington
Bruin
Fairview
West Sunbury
Petrolia
Hooker
Karns City
Greece City
Kaylor
Bradys Bend
Woodbine
North Oakland
East
Adams
Sherrel
Lamartine
Wentlings Corners
Turkey City
Blairs Corners
Alum Rock
Elmo
Elk City
Shippenville
Clarion Junction
Mida
Fisher
Furnace
Straitanville
Day
Richardsville
Howe
Hazen
Warsaw
Sigel
Mundert
Sugar Hill
Brockway
Crenshaw
Westville
Lanes Mills
Coal Glen
Allens Mills
Poit Barnett
Falls Creek
Du Bois
Rathmel
Oklahoma
Pancoast
Stanley
Helvetia
Salem
Soldier
Sykesville
Stump Creek
Big Run
Foxburg
Cloe
Hudson
Newtonburg
McGees Mills
Rossiter
Irishtown
Troutville
Desire
Panic
Coolspring
Worthville
Markton
Sprankle Mills
Oliveburg
Anita
Albion
Frostburg
Grange
Timblin
McWilliams
Putneyville
Hamilton
Valier
Porter
Belknap
Templeton
Gobbinsville
Widnoon
Rimer
Reesedale
Distant
Kellersburg
Wattersonville
Lawsonham
New Bethlehem
Fairmount City
South Bethlehem
Ringgold
Mayport
Hawthorn
North Freedom
Leatherwood
Hillville
West Monterey
West Freedom
Huey
Sligo
Callensburg
Curllsville
Limestone
Kingsville
Shannondale
Summerville
Heathville
Stanton
Knox Dale
Emerickville
Baxter
Roseville
Mechanicsville
Reidsburg
Corsica

Red Bank Creek

Sandy Lick Creek, the other major component stream of the main Red Bank, is also stocked with trout over an 18-mile section. The upper reaches of Sandy Lick, around Falls Creek, hold feasible populations of bass and pike. Sandy Lick is primarily an early season trout fishery. Better September bets are Mill Creek and Little Mill Creek, which enter Sandy Lick near the village of Port Barnett. Both are stocked and also contain some wild brook trout, especially in their upper reaches.

The Red Bank Creek that begins with the junction of the North Fork and Sandy Lick Creek is a large stream and the most popular trout fishing destination in Jefferson County. It is stocked with trout from Brookville downstream almost to the Clarion County line. High summer water temperatures depress the trout fishery here during the hot months, but the cooler nights of September cause the remaining trout once again to put on the feed bag.

Warmwater fishing

Area Fisheries Manager Ron Lee calls this lower stocked section of Red Bank Creek "transitional water," and indeed, it is in this portion of the stream that a viable fishery for smallmouth bass and northern pike begins to emerge. As the stream nears Summerville along Route 28 near the Clarion County line, the Red Bank trout become few and far between, and the stream becomes essentially a warmwater fishery.

From Brookville downstream, Red Bank Creek carries enough water to warrant a look from float-fishing anglers. This is a popular way to fish this section of the stream for trout early in the season. In the 18 miles of water between Brookville and Summerville, the Red Bank follows the same general southwesterly course as nearby Route 28. Along much of this section, however, the stream leaves the nearness of the highway to wander off on its own several miles away from the highway. Anglers in canoes can access these more isolated sections of the stream by putting in either along Route 36 near Brookville or along Route 28 at Summerville. The small village of Heathville, a few miles south of Summerville on SR 3007, touches the Red Bank and offers access either to the floating or hiking fisherman.

Most of the Jefferson County section of the main Red Bank is characterized by slow, deep pools and large numbers of downed trees to provide fish cover. The prospecting angler should look for bass in areas where the flow quickens somewhat and there are rocks and logs in the stream to provide cover. Trout can often be found most often in the deeper pools, especially those with a spring hole in their bottoms, and near areas where small coldwater tributaries enter the stream.

Northern pike

As the Red Bank crosses into Clarion County a few miles downstream from Heathville, the numbers of bass increase as do those of northern pike. Pike are perhaps the most underutilized of all the Red Bank fisheries. They inhabit the stream from Brookville to the mouth. Local anglers report that they appear to be most numerous in the slower-water sections between Summerville and New Bethlehem in Clarion County.

As Red Bank Creek passes the villages of Mayport, Hawthorn and Fairmont City in southeast Clarion County, it once again becomes a close traveling partner with Route 28. The highway parallels the stream all the way into New Bethlehem, offering numerous access points. A public park in downtown New Bethlehem offers a spot where anglers can launch or take out a canoe, or fish on foot. Floating fishermen contemplating putting in or taking out here should be aware of a five-foot dam at the downstream end of the park. Watch for it, and don't try to run it.

Red Bank Creek presents yet another of its many faces as it leaves New Bethlehem and begins the final 21-mile leg of its journey to the Allegheny. High, steep ridges enclose the stream in a narrow valley, and points of road access become decidedly more scarce. Only three roads come near the stream in this section. Access to the first two, at Climax and St. Charles, is via SR 1004 west out of the village of Distant along Route 28 about four miles south of New Bethlehem.

The final bridge on the Red Bank is at Lawsonham, about 10 miles upstream from the Allegheny. SR2009 leaves Route 68 at the Clarion County town of Rimersburg and descends over a steep mountain to meet the stream here.

There is parking and access available at all three of these points on the lower Red Bank, but it all lies on privately held property. Please respect the landowners' rights and help keep these waters open by being a considerate angler who does not litter or otherwise disturb this beautiful valley or its residents.

The first dozen miles of this section of the stream, from New Bethlehem to Lawsonham, displays a good mix of riffles, rocky pocket water and long, slow pools framed by boulder-studded banks and dense hardwood forests. The smallmouth habitat in this portion of the Red Bank is the best that the stream has to offer and there are excellent numbers of bass.

Below Lawsonham, the Red Bank tends to run deeper and slower as it nears its union with the Allegheny. Smallmouth are still present in good numbers here, but there appears to be fewer than in the New Bethlehem to Lawsonham section. Because of the deeper nature of the water, and the migration of fish out of the Allegheny, this lowest section of Red Bank Creek is host to fair numbers of walleyes and muskies in addition to the resident bass population.

Northerns also do better in this slower water, and fishing for them picks up again in this portion of the stream. There is some posting on the Red Bank below Lawsonham, but anglers who take time to stop and politely ask permission may gain access to water that few others fish.

September weather triggers a substantial increase in the feeding activity of the bass of Red Bank Creek. The fish sense the changes in water temperatures as well as the increasingly shorter days, and they react by spending more time actively searching out extra food to help them through the coming winter. As the water temperatures continue to cool, northerns also begin to feed more actively. These changes make September one of the best choices to plan an outing here.

Bass that spent a good part of the summer in the more highly oxygenated broken water sections of the stream can now be found cruising the edges of the deeper pools and rocky flats in search of prey. Pick a pool where the banks offer a lot of pockets and slack areas around boulders and piles of smaller rocks. Steep, grassy banks that drop off quickly into deeper water are also prime candidates to hold bass.

Watch for what I call "grade A lies." These are the places

The prospecting angler should look for bass in areas where the flow quickens somewhat and there are rocks and logs in the stream to provide cover.

in every stream where a very special combination of cover conditions create the ultimate in holding water. A good example is a situation where a large log or boulder lies just a foot or so from a grassy bank with a steep dropoff. Either the boulder or the grassy bank would be enough to attract bass on its own. When both are combined in the same lie, they are irresistible to the bass and often hold the largest fish in the stream.

The same effect can be produced when there is overhanging cover in the form of trees or bushes directly over a rocky bank side pocket. Even though they are one of the most aggressive predators in the stream, smallmouths have a soft spot for places where they can hide and feel safe. The angler who takes the time to make a sidearm cast into these tight spots along the bank might lose the occasional fly or lure, but he will catch more bass.

One of the most satisfying things about early autumn fishing for stream bass is leaving behind the constraints of the early and late-day prime angling times that are par for the course in summer. You can have good action all day in September. In fact, sometimes the best fishing is during midday. This is especially true later in the month when a cold night can drop the temperature of a large stream like Red Bank Creek into the upper 50s. Smallmouth feed actively in these temperatures, especially in the fall.

However, the optimum feeding temperatures for stream bass are in the mid to upper 60s. The late September sun still has enough authority to warm the water to these temperatures over the course of a morning, making an afternoon trip to the stream far more worthwhile than in the heat of July.

Lure strategies

Whether I am fishing with spinning or fly tackle, my favorite way to take bass is on top. September, with its cruising bass, is a prime month for this kind of action. Drop a small surface lure like a Tiny Torpedo, a Crippled Killer or a Jitterbug in close to bank-side rocks and logs. Smallmouths seem to change their minds from one day to the next about which kind of retrieve excites them most. Try letting the lure lie still until all the ripples have died away, and then give it a slight pop with a flick of your rod hand. Often, a bass will have been drawn by the lure's initial splash, and he will be laying directly under it, just waiting for it to move. When it does, he will pounce on it.

If there is no strike in reaction to this first movement, begin a slow, deliberate retrieve, occasionally letting the lure stop dead, and then starting it moving again.

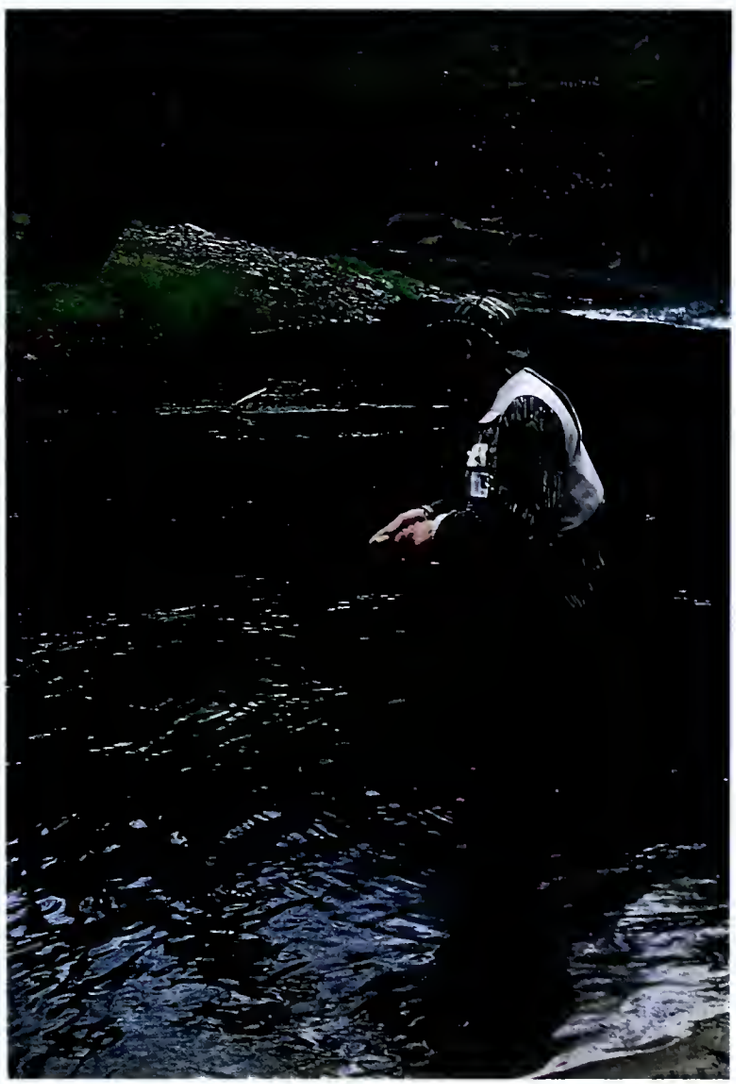
If this doesn't work, throw the book away and try something completely different. As soon as your lure hits the water, crank it for all you are worth, pausing briefly from time to time. Bass are greedy by nature and don't like to let food get away. This rapid, splashy recovery often pushes them over the brink and they attack.

The fly angler fishing with surface poppers should try the same variety of retrieves, and keep switching until he finds the one that strikes the right one with the bass. I haven't found popper color to be important to success. I usually do best on poppers in shades of white, yellow or green. This could very well be because most of the poppers I own are these colors.

On the other hand, I believe that popper or lure size is critical. In so-called "smaller streams" like Red Bank Creek and others, smaller seems to be better. For the spin fisherman, this means lures in the 1/4-ounce class. Fly anglers should stick with poppers no larger than a size 4, with size 6 is the best all-around choice.

I prefer to take my bass on top, but there are days when this is just not in the cards. These are times when I reach for 1/4-ounce or 3/8-ounce jigs in shades of chartreuse, yellow or white. These offerings entice numerous bass when fished along rocky banks and in the pockets behind in-stream boulders. Medium-size spinners and smaller crankbaits are also effective subsurface offerings.

Fishing for stream smallmouth is one of Pennsylvania's most satisfying angling experiences. It is also one of the most underutilized. If you haven't given it a try yet, you are missing some great fishing. From its deep, sandy pools near Brookville to the singing, broken-water flats near Lawsonham, Red Bank Creek is an excellent place to begin.



PLAN AND TAKE A

Pennsylvania Trout Adventure

by Mark A. Nale



A few lucky anglers get to cast over New Zealand's monster trout or visit Alaska for salmon. Others hop north to the Catskills or trek to Montana or Wyoming to try their luck with western trout. But budget, time and work constraints leave most of us happy just to be able to fish here at home.

Although you might miss the "big adventure," there is no reason to mope around dragging your rod in the dirt. Set your sights closer to home. We've got lots of adventure right here in the Keystone State with trout fishing opportunities that are hard to beat anywhere.

I live in northern Centre County, so most of my angling takes place in Centre County or neighboring Blair County. Each year I break from this pattern, abandon the local water, and set aside a day or two to take a Pennsylvania trout adventure. To qualify as real "adventure," I plan at least one full day, but better two, of fishing new water. Most of these trips involve more than an hour of driving, but there are still a few streams that I have never sampled close to home.

Some of my adventures are taken alone, a few have been with my wife, but most are with one of my brothers, my dad, or more recently with my son. None of these trips is taken lightly. All begin with an idea and all are the result of considerable planning and forethought.



photos-Mark A. Nale

The idea

Ideas come from many different places–a comment overheard at a sports show, an article in the *Angler*, a friend's success, or just an attractive blue line on a topographic map. Investigation and planning are necessary to turn an idea into a successful trip.

"Did you ever fish so-and-so Run over in so-and-so County? It's really good." Angler comments are the most suspect of my information sources, but the chance remark made by a fisherman could really pay off. The first thing I do when a stream is recommended is try to evaluate the quality of the information. I ask questions. How many times did you fish this run? What did you catch? Were the trout stocked or wild?

In other words, I'd like the information giver to define "good." If the angler information passes all my tests, I look the stream up on a map and check it out in one or more of my trout fishing books. The comment could become an idea and the idea could evolve into a Pennsylvania trout trip.

In June of 1989, I met two brothers, Dave and Casper, baitfishing on a small, wild trout stream near my home. We started chatting and I took a few photos while they fished. During the course of the conversation (and after I told them that I, like they, threw back most of my catch), Dave said that if I liked this stream, then I'd really like another creek–his "home" water. Dave was catching trout (he knew what he was doing) and he was aware of wild trout, so the information seemed good. I jotted some directions in my fishing notebook and thanked him for the tip.

The stream looked promising on the map and my brother Frank was game for a little adventure, so July 22 became the day. Without getting into numbers that some people wouldn't believe anyway, I'll just say that stream conditions were perfect when we started, and they remained that way for the eight hours we fished. What a stream! What a tip! And yes, what an adventure! Frank had a super day and I recorded my highest daily total for the year on that new water. We've visited it many times since.

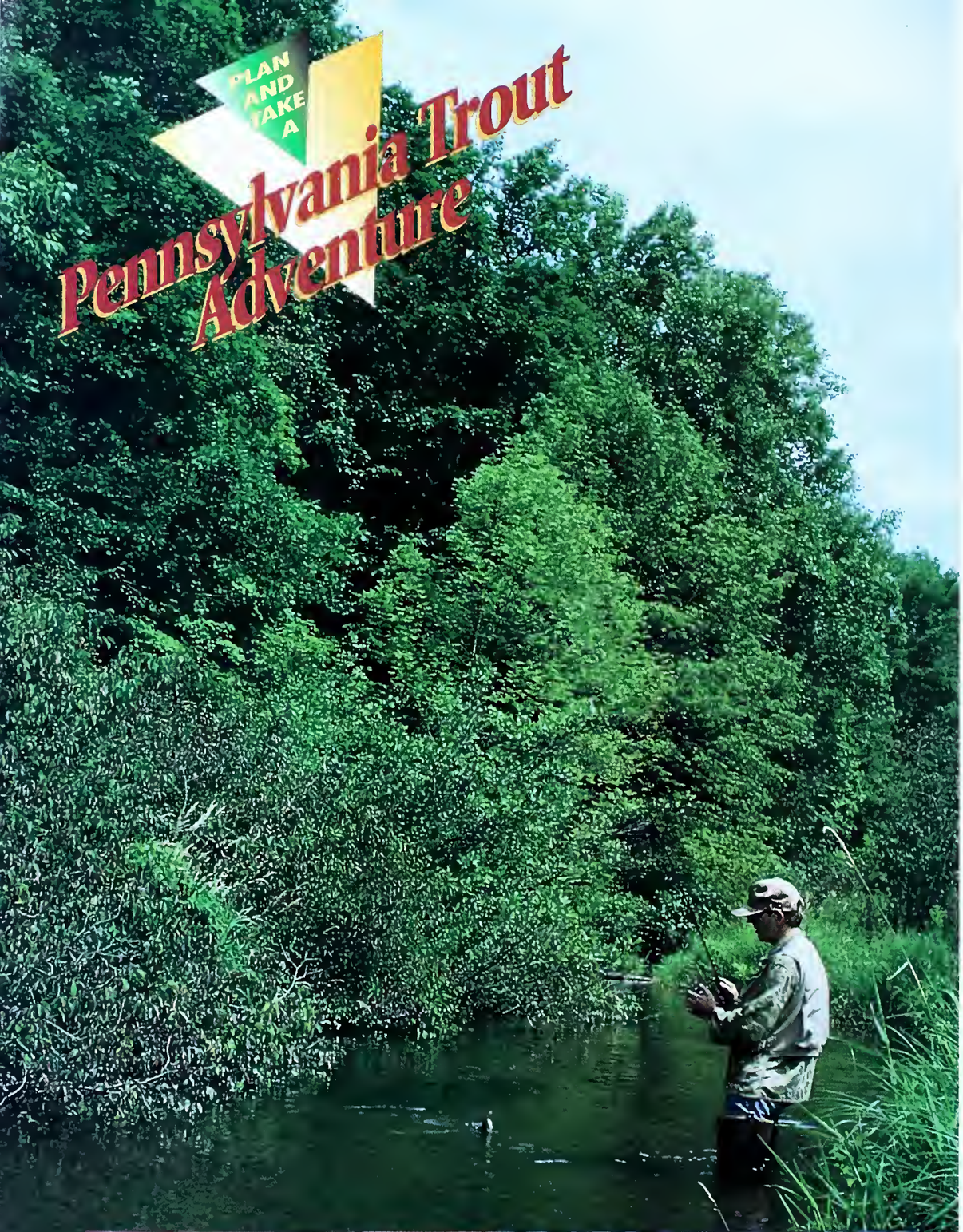
Outdoor publications and fishing magazines in particular provide a wealth of ideas for my fishing adventures. I weigh magazine advice the same way that I scrutinize angler tips. Who wrote the article, what exactly does the author say, and what publication is it in?–are all good points to consider. In one publication (not the *Angler*) I read that Potter County's Kettle Creek was a limestone stream and another article stated that Yellow Creek (Bedford County) was a freestone trout stream. Both of these statements are false and made me suspect of any stream tips that those authors might give.

The January and February 1994 issues of *Pennsylvania Angler*, for example, contained three informative articles that could form the basis for a trout trip. "The Hemlock Creek Watershed," by Linda Steiner, is a self-contained trip, and Ed Howey's "Early Season Trout in the Poconos" could form the foundation for several trout adventures. If you read much, you know that Linda and Ed are widely published in the area of trout fishing. I know both of them, so vouch for the quality of their stream information.

In "The Hemlock Creek Watershed," Steiner details four streams of the drainage–Hemlock Creek and three tributaries: Reese, Porcupine and Norway (a trib to Porcupine) runs. Because I took this trout adventure six years ago, I know that Steiner's stream descriptions, as well as Area Fisheries Manager Ron Lee's trout population reports, are accurate. We are lucky that this special watershed was recently purchased by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the land is now protected from development. We also can be thankful that the streams won't become part of a private fishing club.

My brother Frank and I arrived at Porcupine Run just a little after daybreak. It had been more than a two-hour drive, but

PLAN AND TAKE A Pennsylvania Trout Adventure





we were eager to hit the new water and catch some wild rainbow trout. After parking near the mouth, we fished up "Porky" all morning and had a great time catching tiny brook and rainbow trout. The trout were a bonus, however, because it was invigorating just to see the beautifully sculpted bedrock, huge boulders and streamside cliffs that Porky had to offer. One thing that I love about trout exploring is that each turn in the stream brings new sights into view.

An hour walk took us back to the car for a lunch that we had packed. Our plans were to hike into Reese Run after lunch, but we were lucky–Hemlock Creek had no other anglers. We elected to fish up Hemlock to the point where Reese entered instead of walking to the mouth first. Initially, we caught only stocked trout in the bigger flow, but as soon as the stream turned away from the road, we landed wild trout of all three species–a special treat. The last hour before dark we spent exploring tiny Reese Run and sampling its naturally reproduced trout population.

Not every angler shares our appreciation for wild trout or adventure. At dark, we struck up a conversation with another fisherman as we debooted and loaded our gear into the car. When he learned that I lived in Centre County, "trout paradise," in his words, he asked, "What are you doing up here?"

Our adventure continued the next morning as we sampled five other northwestern Pennsylvania streams. Unfortunately for us, a cold front followed by a high pressure system (angler excuses) killed our fishing. Although we fished hard all day, we landed only 34 trout between us. The stream that yielded the largest browns, Venango County's Cherry Run, has since been devastated by a gasoline spill, so I won't send you there.

Ed Howey's piece in the February 1994 *Angler* covers several dozen Pocono streams that include Class A, Wilderness, special regulation and numerous stocked trout waters. I've had several Pocono adventures already, but his article, complete with directions, certainly makes me want to plan another trip for this year.

photos-Mark A. Nale

"Codorus Creek," by Seth P. Cassell in the January 1994 *Angler*, is also another "idea" article. The author describes the stream well, outlines the regulations and includes a helpful map.

Planning

Once an idea moves into the planning stage, I consider five important factors. First, I like to target several streams instead of just one. Although one stream may remain the primary destination, the alternate selections give me a place to go if I encounter too many other anglers, high muddy water, extreme water temperatures, or no trout. I don't want to drive for three hours and not have a place to fish.

For example, a trip to Codorus Creek would have to include one or two alternate selections for me. After checking the stocked streams listed in my 1994 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* and three angling books, I located several streams that would be a short drive west on Route 30 and several others in the Muddy Creek watershed to the east. In his book *Pennsylvania Trout and Salmon Fishing Guide,* Mike Sajna, another *Angler* contributor, says, "Muddy Creek is probably the best trout stream in York County." Sajna's evaluation certainly provides another reason to visit that part of the state.

A second factor, particularly during the summer, is water temperature. I love to find a morning water temperature of 58 degrees, but during July I gladly settle for something in the mid to low 60s. In planning, I try to select a stream that might get too warm by afternoon as an early morning destination and then hit a wooded mountain stream or a spring-fed limestoner in the afternoon.

Referring again to Codorus Creek, the *Angler* article mentions the positive effect of water released into the stream from Lake Marburg. Books can be helpful here also. Dwight Landis in *Trout Streams of Pennsylvania: An Angler's Guide* (a book that I refer to quite often), adds that these releases "keep the water temperature below 65 degrees all summer long." This is especially important in summer planning because a bottom discharge from Lake Marburg would keep summer stream temperatures cool, and the delayed-harvest regulations should ensure a supply of trout even into July.

A third factor to consider is angler pressure. I don't like to drive halfway across the state only to run into a horde of anglers. I plan most treks to be taken after mid-May to avoid this. A recent trout adventure took Frank and me to Falling Spring, the lower Letort, and the C&R section of the Yellow Breeches, all in the Carlisle-Chambersburg area. We anticipated the greatest angler pressure on the Breeches, so we decided to be there at first light and visit the other two waters later in the day. Our logic proved to be correct. The parking lot was full when we left the Breeches. We found the other streams empty of anglers. Although our "limestone pilgrimage" didn't net many trout, we each caught one trout over 16 inches long.

If your main interest is stocked trout, late April and early May can be the best time to do some exploring. By consulting the *Inseason Trout Stocking Schedule*, published by the Commission, you can control this fourth factor by hitting new water during the week that the stream is scheduled to be restocked. Although the newly planted trout attract anglers, you can lessen the effect by traveling to an area where three or four streams are stocked during the same week–therefore spreading out the local anglers.

The last item to consider when planning a trout adventure is the route, travel time and little details. Unless I'm zig-zagging to hit several inviting blue lines on a map, I usually plan for the simplest and most direct routes. This is particularly important when navigating in unfamiliar territory during the predawn hours. Getting lost, or ending up on the wrong stream, adds little to the fishing experience.

I always begin with the time that I'd like to start fishing on the chosen stream, (usually daybreak during the summer) allowing for travel, and I set my time to leave home based on that. Travel time can be figured by calculating the trip miles on a highway map and then allowing about one hour for each 50 miles on major roads. Allow more time for travel on secondary roads. This time guide would let you make a "pit stop" and still arrive at your destination by sunup. Sometimes I select a starting stream closer to home, fish it first, and then continue on to another more distant destination. The same thing can work in reverse on the return trip. If fishing is poor at my target streams, I have the option of cutting out early and fishing another stream on the way home.

Think about where to buy gas, meals, etc. The "golden arches" don't grow near some of the best trout waters, and that's why I usually pack a meal or two along with a cooler full of cold drinks. Whether camping or renting a room, an overnight stay takes a little more planning. Sometimes magazine articles supply suggestions and phone numbers.

Be prepared

The motto "Be Prepared" is never more important than when taking a trout fishing trip. Always carry dry socks and a change of clothing (maybe two changes) in case you fall in. An extra pair of hipboots can be a trip saver. Once, just an hour into a two-day adventure, I tore a big (non-patchable) hole in the foot of a new pair of hipboots. I've also needed a spare rod, reel, and extra line on more than one occasion.

The best of plans can be derailed by unexpected extreme high or low water. No trespassing signs don't show up on topographic maps, either. Always try to have alternate streams planned. Bad weather can also be a downer–pack a raincoat. I also have along a road map as well as any books or articles that might be useful.

My trout adventures have taken me to Potter, Clinton, Warren, Sullivan, Venango and Tioga counties, the Poconos, the Allegheny National Forest, the Cumberland Valley and other interesting locations. Although I've found trout everywhere, some trips have certainly produced more fish than others. The number of trout caught often becomes insignificant when I remember the hundreds of white trillium that I found along Warren County's Thompson Run, the beautiful waterfalls on Mill Creek in Sullivan County, the newborn fawn that I almost tramped on while fishing Red Run, or the black bear that my brother Frank saw crossing a log that spanned the South Branch of Kinzua Creek.

Careful planning can turn an angler suggestion or magazine article into a successful trout adventure. I think you'll find that fishing the "new water" of our home state offers many rewards beyond just the fish caught. My home water also offers many trip opportunities for other anglers. The Little Juniata River, Spring Creek and Blair County's Bald Eagle Creek could each make the beginnings of a good July adventure. Get out a map, a stack of recent *Anglers* and start planning. And one more thing–don't forget your toothbrush!



Bureau of Fisheries Director Del Graff (left) was presented with the American Fisheries Society (AFS) Northeast Division Dwight Webster Memorial Award. This prestigious award is the organization's highest for professional merit. Graff joined the Commission in 1964 as a biologist. He has served as head of the agency's fisheries programs for the last 20 years. Graff received the award in May at the Northeast Fish & Wildlife Conference, in Vermont. Presenting the award is AFS Northeast Division President Carolyn Griswold.



photo-Carl Richardson

WCO Robert Steiner Named "Officer of the Year"

Venango County Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Robert Steiner has been named the Commission's "Officer of the Year."

Steiner, 44, began his career with the Commission in 1972 as a fish culturist at the Fairview Fish Culture Station. In 1974 he became a WCO serving Luzerne County. He assumed his post in Venango County in 1985.

In announcing the award, Bureau of Law Enforcement Director Edward W. Manhart praised the officer saying, "Robert Steiner approaches his varied duties with enthusiasm and in a most professional manner, always keeping in mind the best interests of the angling and boating public."

Steiner was officially awarded at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference, last May.–*Dan Tredinnick.*



photo-Art Michaels

Trout Stamp Artwork Selected

Artwork judges and Commission dignitaries surround an original painting by Wisconsin artist Terry Doughty, which has been selected to appear on the 1995 trout and salmon permit. Doughty's painting of two Lake Erie steelhead was selected from 44 entries in a contest sponsored in May by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The entries were judged by a five-member panel. The art will appear on all 1995 Pennsylvania trout and salmon stamps, which are required to fish legally for the species. The artwork will also appear on a series of limited-edition prints. The annual stamps and prints have become collectors' favorites in the four short years they have been available. The trout and salmon stamps and the prints will go on sale in December. In the photograph are (left to right) Commission Graphic Services Section Chief Ted R. Walke, Commission Chief Counsel Dennis T. Guise, print contractor George LaVanish, Commissioner Samuel M. Concilla, Bureau of Administrative Services Director Allison J. Mayhew, Bureau of Fisheries Director Delano R. Graff, and Game Commission Bureau of Information and Education Assistant Director J. Carl Graybill.

Commission President Biery Dead at 67

Commission President James S. Biery, Jr., 67, died last May 23. Biery was appointed to the Commission in 1991 by Governor Robert P. Casey. He represented the Sixth District, consisting of Franklin, Perry, Cumberland, Adams, Dauphin, York, Lebanon and Lancaster counties.



At the time of his death, Biery was serving as president of the Commission. He had just completed presiding over four days of Commission meetings in State College and returned to his Harrisburg home.

Among the many tasks Biery undertook as a Commissioner was chairing the search committee currently involved in selecting a new Commission executive director.

Commissioner Biery was a graduate of Muhlenberg College and a veteran of World War II and the Korean conflict. He was a past president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

Anglers Currents

Helping Handicapped Anglers

Let me explain how I dealt with my paraplegia and became serious about fishing again. I used to fish mainly from a boat. I had a huge tackle box and I could cover a lot of good fishing area. When my accident happened and I found out I was permanently paralyzed from the mid-chest down, all this changed.

You have to have two things to benefit the most from this article–self-determination and hope. First of all, get rid of that big, bulky tackle box, and get a fishing vest or a creel. Do away with a lot of unpopular lures and unused tackle. Buy a couple of plastic tackle compartments that seal tightly and fit easily into a vest or creel. In this way nothing spills and everything is sealed, compact and efficient. I prefer a creel with a smaller attachment compartment with it. I usually keep my trout and ultralight equipment in the small compartment, and I detach it when I fish for bass or catfish. If I'm strictly baitfishing, I even leave my bass and musky lures at home in their plastic compartment–the more room the better! My creel has a zippered pocket on the outside that I keep my hooks and sinkers in.

You are in a wheelchair and not as mobile as you once were, so you really have to beef up your tackle. I prefer a saltwater spinning reel with a heavy duty rod and 17-pound test. I have a baitcasting reel with 14-pound test, and I use a smaller reel with 10-pound test for trout. A pushbutton reel seems to be the easiest for most handicapped anglers to use.

If you are fishing from a bridge or another place high above the water, you might want to invest in a drop net and a rope.

Make sure you have big enough front caster wheels. I use 8-inch extra-wide ones. I used to have 5-inch wheels, but they wouldn't go anywhere. I also suggest you have a hook sharpener. We handicapped fishermen need all the help we can get. But if we're fishing at a fairly decent spot, have a heavy rod, good line, and a sharp hook with the appropriate bait or lure, we have an excellent chance of success. Whenever I throw my line in the water, it seems as if I throw all my problems away with it for a little while.–*Brad Gates*.

Ted Walke Receives Commission Employee Recognition Award

Ted R. Walke, Chief of the Commission Graphic Services Section, received the Fish and Boat Commission's Employee Recognition Award at the Commission's May meeting. Walke was recognized for his outstanding service and expertise in the development of high-quality materials that have played an important role in the agency's carrying out its mission. The Commission Recognition and Awards Program honors employees for outstanding service, a special project, cost-saving, safety and lifesaving.

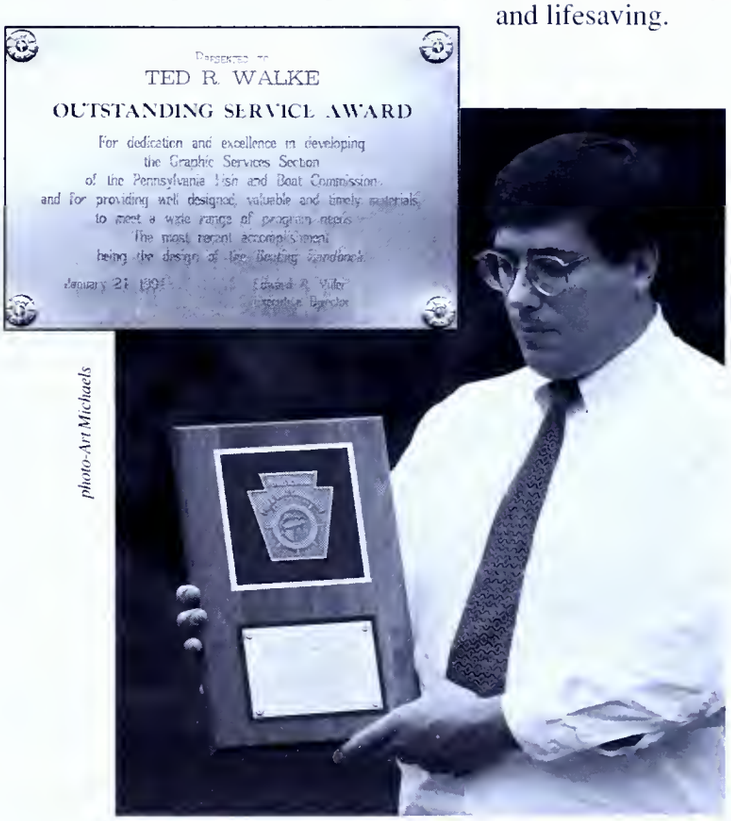


photo-Art Michaels

Once-in-a-lifetime trout experience

After 55 years of fly fishing for trout on streams like Kettle Creek, Pine Creek, Slate Run and Young Woman's Creek, I must admit I never encountered a situation like the one that happened to me on April 25, 1990.

While fishing with a size 14 dry fly and a 3X tapered leader, I hooked a 10-inch brown trout. The trout ran downstream about 25 feet into water nearly five feet deep. As I retrieved my slack line, the hooked trout apparently went under a rock or got tangled in some submerged branches.

I increased tension on the line and felt a wiggle. I added more tension but felt no movement. That's when I realized a big trout had nabbed my fish.

Finally, I saw the big fish. It was about two feet long. My 10-incher, a lighter-colored fish, was in its jaws. Frustrated about what to do, I held a light tension on the line for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, it occurred to me that if the large fish swallowed my little fish, perhaps I could land them both. I began applying pressure. About 10 minutes later, the huge trout turned toward me and my 10-incher popped out.

The big lunker immediately raced after the smaller trout and caught it in its jaws a second time. I held the line with light tension for a while, and then began applying more pressure. After another 10-minute wait, my 10-incher got loose a second time. The big lunker chased it about five feet before clamping down on the little trout a third time.

I suddenly realized I could not win this battle. My size 14 hook was buried in the smaller fish's mouth and there was no way I could get a hook into the larger fish. I decided to wait 10 more minutes to see if I could land both fish. When I increased pressure one last time, the smaller fish popped out again and I brought it in for keeps.

When I examined the little brownie, I discovered that both sides of it were covered with large teeth marks. Moreover, the little fish was so flimsy, its bones must have been crushed.

The big lunker, however, is still swimming. It was just too much for me to catch, but I'll remember its strength for the rest of my days.–*Michael J. Redos, Renovo, PA*.

National ARE Conference Comes to Pennsylvania

This month, the Fish and Boat Commission will host the 1994 National Aquatic Resource Education Conference in State College on August 13 through 17. State agency program coordinators will gather to learn new and better ways of coordinating their states' aquatic and fishing skills programs. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff, tackle manufacturers and other aquatic educators will be on hand to participate in the conference.

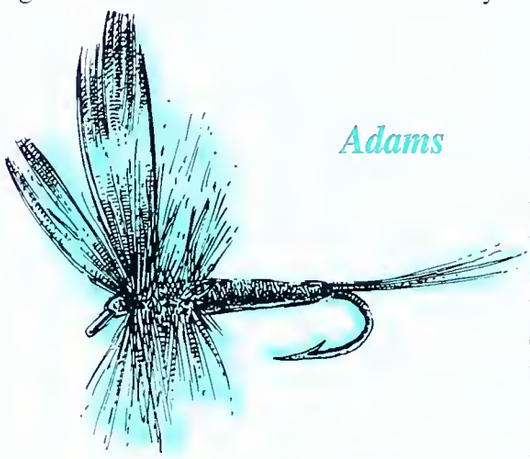
WIDENING THE NET

The Aquatic Resource Education Program is funded nationwide through the Sport Fish Restoration Fund through the sales of fishing tackle and related items. Most states and several U.S. territories offer some type of ARE program. Pennsylvania's KARE Program includes teacher workshops on the Commonwealth's aquatic ecology and fishing skills classes for children and adults. For more information, contact KARE Coordinator Carl Richardson at P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, or phone 717-657-4518.

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*

Dry flies are deadly on panfish. Cast the fly, and allow it to sit motionless for a few seconds, until all the rings on the water have disappeared. Retrieve the fly with very soft, slow twitches, letting the fly rest often during the retrieve. An Adams is a productive dry fly for panfish.

During the summer, big brown trout like to move into the shallows at night to feed. The best fly to use to fool these predators is one that is large and bushy. Try big hairwing dry flies, large nymphs and very bulky streamers.



Adams

The next time you're fishing from a boat, have two rods rigged and ready to go. Put a surface lure on one rod and a sub-surface lure like a plastic worm or a crankbait on the other. This lets you quickly shift from one tactic to another without a lot of fuss.

Walleyes often roam in schools, so a good way to locate them is by trolling. Concentrate on the gravelly, or sandy bottom parts of a lake, and use a spinner tipped with a minnow or worm.

Catfish aren't too particular about what they eat, and it is easy to make a bait that will entice them to bite. Some favorites are a strong-smelling cheese, like Limburger, kneaded into flour; blood and flour; cornmeal with honey and hamburger; or a chunk of chicken liver.

When fly fishing, especially with small flies, make sure to check the hook point often. It would be a shame to lose a good fish because the point of your hook had been dulled, nicked or broken from hitting a tree limb, rock or other obstacle.

Put a small magnet in your tackle box. It can come in handy should you spill a box of hooks in the bottom of your boat.

When trying out a new fly rod in the store, wiggle it back and forth a few times and note where the rod flexes. A "fast action" rod bends near the tip, and a "slow action" rod bends more toward the rod butt. "Fast action" rods are generally easier for beginners to cast.

An easy way to keep tippet material from coming off the spool and tangling in your vests is to wrap a small rubber band around the spool. This keeps the tippet on the spool, and the end of the tippet always readily available.

Minnows are a favorite bait for crappies. Look for fish around structure, next to deeper water, during the summer months. Boat docks and submerged trees tucked back in a cove are good places to start.

When the sun is bright, and high in the sky, look for bass in the shady parts of the lake. Flip a plastic worm or jig under overhanging branches, boat docks and in the pockets of lily pads.

illustration-Ted Walke

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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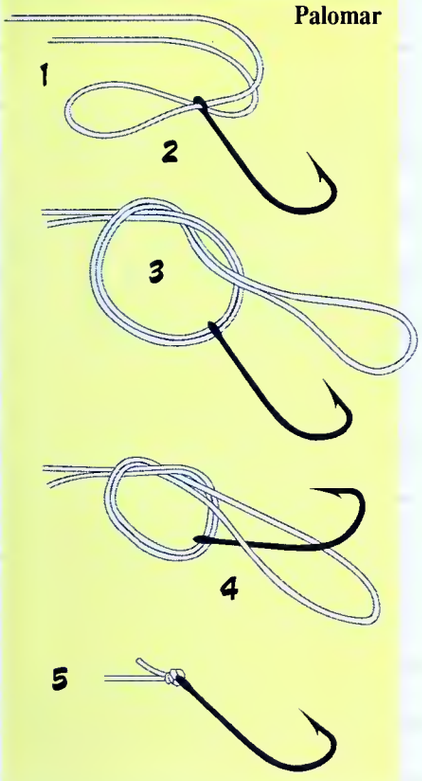
SMART Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

Knotes on Knots

A poorly tied knot can weaken line strength by 50 percent or more! For example, fishing a lousy knot on four-pound test is like fishing with two-pound test.

Palomar



Knots for Attaching Lures/Hooks

Palomar

1. Make a loop of four inches or so of line.
2. Put loop through eye.
3. Tie an overhand knot with loop. Hook should dangle from middle of knot.
4. Put loop over hook.
5. Pull both lines to tighten.

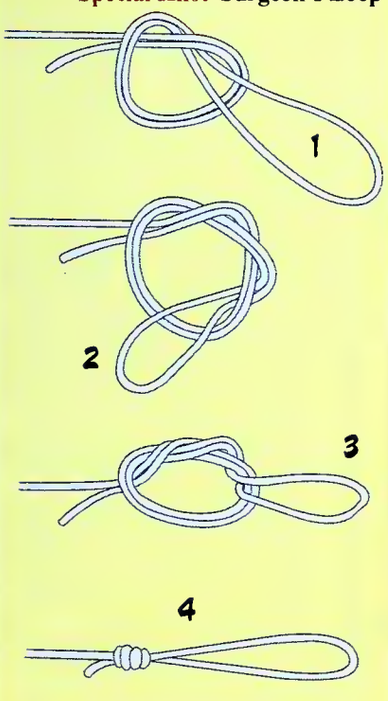
Note: One of the easiest and strongest knots. Not such a good knot for attaching crankbaits or lures with lots of hooks. Easier to teach beginners or children.

Improved Clinch

1. Thread line through eye and double back on line.
2. Wrap loose end around line to reel five times.
3. Thread loose end through first loop above the eye.
4. Thread end through the big loop made in step #3.
5. Pull tight.

Note. To tie a regular clinch knot skip step 4

Special Knot–Surgeon's Loop



Knots for Joining Two Pieces of Line

Blood Knot

1. Overlap two pieces of line by about two inches.
2. Wrap loose end #1 around line # 2 five times.
3. Put loose end #1 between line #2 and line #1.
4. Wrap loose end #2 around line #1 five times.
5. Thread loose end #2 through loop made between #1 and #2.
6. Holding the loose ends and the running lines, tighten.

Surgeon Knot

1. Lay pieces of line side by side, overlapping about six inches.
2. Tie an overhand knot, using both pieces. Don't tighten.
3. Pull loose ends through knot again.
4. Holding line, tighten.

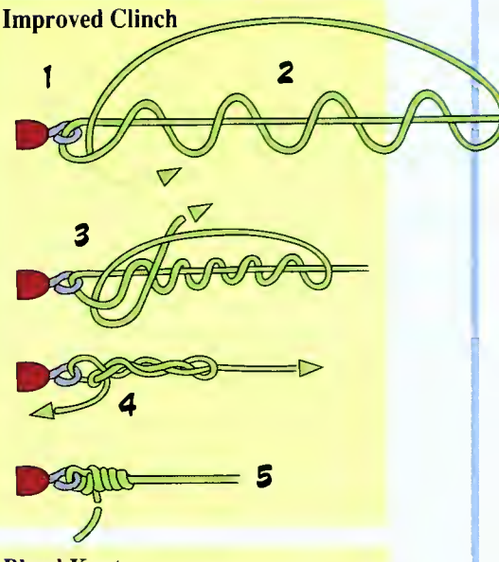
Special Knot

Surgeon's Loop is useful for attaching snelled hooks, swivels and lures that have lots of action.

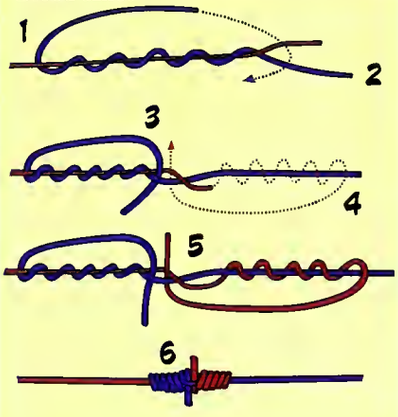
1. Make a loop about one to two inches long.
2. With the loop, tie an overhand knot. Don't tighten.
3. Thread the loop through knot again and tighten.
4. Attach hook to line by threading loop through eye and pass loop over hook.

Tips: Wet the knot with saliva or water before drawing the knot tight. Don't trim too close to knot. Clippers can nick and weaken line.

Improved Clinch



Blood Knot



Surgeon Knot

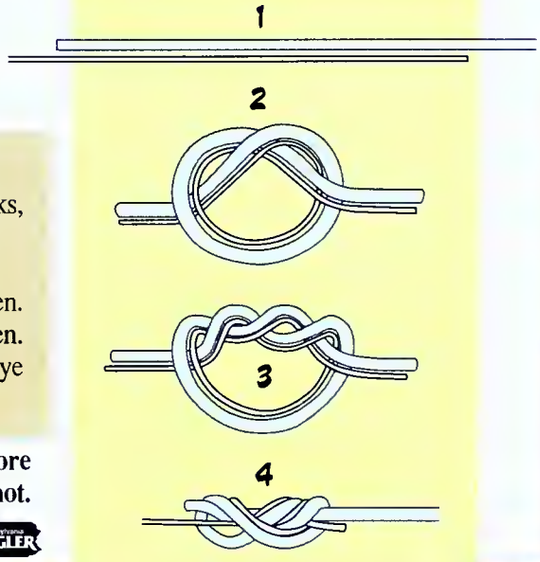


illustration-Ted Walke

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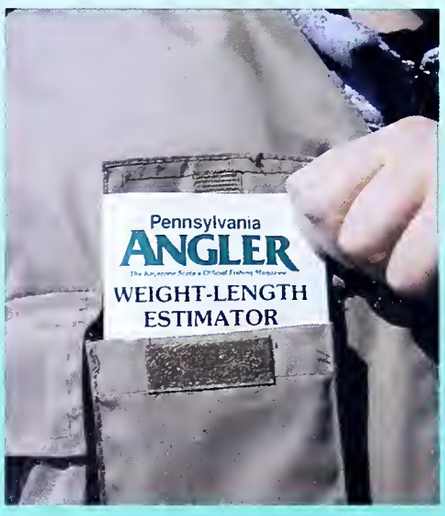
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- Smallmouth bass
- Northern pike
- Pumpkinseed sunfish
- Red-breasted sunfish
- Rock bass
- Striped bass
- Brook trout
- Brown trout
- Rainbow trout
- Walleye
- Yellow perch

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WEIGHT-LENGTH ESTIMATOR





Largemouth Bass



Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight	Inches	Weight
5.5	0.1	11	0.6	16.5	2.3	22	5.9
6	0.1	11.5	0.7	17	2.6	22.5	6.4
5	0.1	12	0.8	17.5	2.8	23	6.9
	0.1	12.5	0.9	18	3.1	23.5	7.4
5	0.2	13	1.1	18.5	3.4	24	7.9
	0.2	13.5	1.2	19	3.7	24.5	8.4
5	0.3	14	1.4	19.5	4.0	25	9.0
	0.3	14.5	1.5	20	4.4	25.5	9.6
5	0.4	15	1.7	20.5	4.7	26	10.2
	0.5	15.5	1.9	21	5.1	26.5	10.9
5	0.5	16	2.1	21.5	5.5	27	11.6

uskellunge



hes	Purebred Weight	Tiger Weight
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.1	0.1
	0.2	0.2
	0.2	0.2
	0.2	0.2
	0.3	0.3
	0.3	0.3
	0.3	0.3
	0.4	0.4
	0.5	0.4

Inches	Purebred Weight	Tiger Weight
14.5	0.7	0.6

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Straight Talk

Susquehanna River Shad Restoration: What's Next?

A working partnership among the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the major utility owners along the Susquehanna River provided significant optimism for shad restoration during our lifetime. The signing of the 1993 agreement to provide fish passage at the Holtwood, Safe Harbor and York Haven dams was historically significant in furthering the Commission's mission of making migratory fish restoration a reality in the Susquehanna River Basin. After all, that is why the Commission was created in 1866. Every day that passes, the Commission comes closer to making a dream a reality. But now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Instead, we must rededicate ourselves to the tasks of developing fish passage and habitat restoration.

Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation, Pennsylvania Power and Light Company, and York Haven Power Company have agreed not only to design fish passages at their dams, but they are also redesigning their fish lifts to enhance the movement of American shad, river herring and American eels. Working with the Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and utility and contractor staffs have come up with ideas to improve fish passage structures to ensure success. In spite of how slow progress appears to be, fish lifts at Holtwood and Safe Harbor should be operational in the spring of 1997. York Haven should be operational for the spring 2000 shad migration. This is only the beginning of the restoration process. Significant challenges loom ahead. Collectively we must stand together to "get the job done" and make fish passage a reality.



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Other dams on major rivers in the Susquehanna River system block or impede fish migration. Under certain conditions, the American shad can pass the Dock Street Dam in Harrisburg. However, we can't rely on conditions being favorable just some of the time. What happens when conditions are not favorable? How much time is lost when shad are delayed while searching for passage through the dams? How many never make the upriver trip to historical spawning grounds, and if they do, what lies ahead? These are the challenges and opportunities we face.

Similar conditions restrict or deny passage at the Diversion Dam owned by Pennsylvania Power and Light (PP&L) at Shamokin. In low flows fish passage is unclear; under high flows we are confident the shad can pass the Diversion Dam uninterrupted. We have agreed with PP&L that assessing shad approach, orientation, and passage are important concerns that could affect the studies of the Fabridam, some 13 miles upriver at Shamokin.

Owned by the Bureau of State Parks, the Fabridam blocks fish movement when the bags are inflated. However, the recreational importance of Lake Augusta, formed by the Fabridam, is significant to the non-angling public. Just when the shad migration peaks in April to June, an obstacle is placed in their way in preparation for the summer recreational season. We are confident that development of a partnership with the Bureau of State Parks with assistance from the Baltimore District Army Corps of Engineers will resolve future conflicts of fish passage.

One other major dam in the "loop" section of the North Branch of the Susquehanna River along the Pennsylvania/New York boundary needs to be addressed for blockage in the future. Eventually blockages by small dams along tributary waters will also have to be identified and corrective action taken.

These restoration goals for the Susquehanna River Basin have been embraced fully by the Chesapeake Bay Program as migratory fish execute their journey from the ocean through the Bay to the Susquehanna River system. Additionally, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission is engaged in an educational project to promote the Commonwealth's efforts of providing historical passage of anadromous fish to their spawning areas. Heightening the public's awareness of the need for fish passage at barriers will assist in the Commission's endeavors to do the right thing for the fish as well as for the anglers.

To enhance the Commission's efforts further, an initiative between the National Marine Fisheries Service and Environmental Protection Agency has provided the state $35,000 for the continuation of the stream and blockage survey and a $45,000 grant to the Commission for the employment of an Anadromous River Restoration Coordinator to support restoration of migratory fish species in Pennsylvania's portion of the Susquehanna River Basin. This person will focus on the restoration of American shad, river herring, striped bass and American eels.

Restoration of migratory fish species is a partnership by local, state and federal organizations. We have a long way to go to achieve the goal of restoring two million American shad to the Susquehanna River upstream of Conowingo Dam. It will be done through a cooperative effort. We are on the right track. Your continued interest and support is paramount in providing migratory fish access to historical and suitable habitat. Keep up the good work!

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PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Pennsylvania ANGLER

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This issue's cover photograph was taken by Darl Black.

Trout-stocking logistics

Last spring I photographed float-stocking on Powells Creek, Dauphin County. I met WCO Barry Mechling at a gas station and convenience store with others who were helping to stock. I had arrived early. One guy in the store questioned me–he had seen the Commission keystone symbols on my hat and car door. I told him we were going to stock fish.

"Oh, trout stocking–yeah, that's easy," he said.

I didn't tell him that WCO Mechling had to make arrangements with the Halifax High School Conservation Club, and some 40 students assisted. I also didn't say that all this had to be coordinated with the Dauphin County Hunters and Anglers, the conservation club that owned the float boxes and also arranged for additional volunteer stocking help. About 4,000 trout had to be loaded onto the truck from the raceways of one of 13 Commission fish culture stations. Then the fish had to be removed carefully from the truck to the buckets, and then to the float boxes in the water. Some 22 places along 20 miles of this stream needed an appropriate number of stocking volunteers, each waiting with float boxes delivered to just the right bridge, farm road or other access. WCO Mechling coordinated everyone's participation. He also worked with individual landowners, securing permission to use fields and roads, and cross private property. Some 81 other WCOs orchestrate similar statewide stocking operations.

Mechling also float-stocks by way of canoes, and in Somerset County this year, WCO Bud Flyte used a Department of Environmental Resources trail groomer, a halftrack, to negotiate a 3-foot-deep snowpack.

Earlier this spring, what with record snowfall, the Commission stocked just about all its preseason fish, and even though the snow had not melted completely by Opening Day, the Commission's inseason stocking went equally smoothly. Even during 1993's high water and blizzard, this kind of stocking activity went on, most often without hitches. This year some 2.4 million fish were stocked preseason this way, and another 2.7 million were stocked inseason–one truckload, one bucket or float box, one stream section at a time.

Oh, sure. Trout stocking is easy.

–Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.

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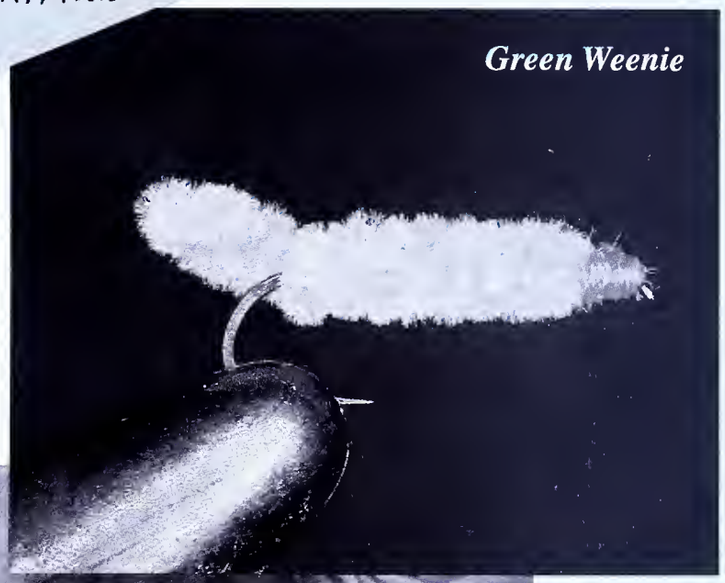
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Dynamic DUO

by Charles R. Meck







It first happened when my son, Bryan, and I fly fished Montana's Bighorn River. In the middle of our drift downriver, Richie Montello, a guide, asked me to tie a new tippet onto my dry fly. He tore off a 2 1/2 foot piece of 4X tippet material and told me to tie it to the bend of the hook of the dry fly. I secured the tippet with an improved clinch knot and then added a wet fly to the tippet. So what's new—many guides and many fly fishers use this same rig out West—but I've never seen an angler use this same setup on Pennsylvania streams. It worked to perfection on that trip.

When I arrived back from the Montana trip, I thought about trying the same rig on Pennsylvania waters. I rationalized that if the rig worked so successfully on Western waters, it should work just as well back home. We didn't have to wait long to try the tandem combination. Dick Henry of Lebanon invited Bryan Meck and me to fly fish with him on Quittapahilla Creek near Annville several years ago. This stream has recently made a gallant recovery from pollution, and Dick reported some good hatches and a good supply of trout even in September. Dick has seen the stream at its worst with plenty of industrial pollution. Within the past couple of years he's witnessed an almost miraculous recovery.

fly photos-Charles R. Meck; brown trout photo-Ed Howey

The three of us arrived at the delayed-harvest section in Annville on Labor Day. I expected to see few hatches and even fewer trout at this late time in the season on this limestone stream. Bryan fished while Dick and I talked about the stream. Dick reminisced about the potential of the stream and how it held trout in earlier years.

Bryan used the same rig that he and I had used several weeks before on the Bighorn. He tied on a Patriot dry fly and added a second large, weighted green wet fly as a second pattern called the Green Weenie. The size 12 or 14 Patriot floats and becomes a readily detectable strike indicator on the surface while the Green Weenie, with lead added in the tying process, sinks. When the dry fly sinks, you probably have a strike on the wet fly. I tie the Green Weenie on a long shank size 10 hook and use medium or fine chartreuse-green chenille for the entire pattern. The Patriot has white calf tail for its wings, brown hackle fibers for the tail and legs, and a body of smolt-blue Krystal Flash, with a midsection of red floss.

The Patriot or any white-winged attractor pattern shows up well on the water. But many anglers overlook the other great advantage to this kind of fly fishing—you actually get strikes on the dry fly. During September trips I've caught as many as one-fourth of the trout on the dry fly. How far the wet fly sinks depends on the kind of water you're fishing—fast, moderate or slow—the length of the tippet and the weight you add to the Green Weenie.

You might question whether or not you can cast the two flies effectively—with a little practice you almost don't notice that you're casting two patterns.

Within a few minutes Bryan caught a 12-inch brown on the rig. In the same stretch of water in the next half-hour, Bryan landed and released a half-dozen more trout on that delayed-harvest area in early September. The three of us headed to another section of the stream and Bryan landed and released six more trout before he quit. Twelve trout in a little more than an hour of fly fishing. Not bad when you realize that this action occurred at the end of the season in early September.

We experienced so much success that day on the Quittapahilla that I decided to test the rig on several other Commonwealth streams. It soon became evident that no matter where I tried the rig—the Patriot and the Green Weenie—I caught trout—on many occasions I increased my catch over normal two or threefold. The rig worked especially well in September and October. I now refer to the two patterns as the "dynamic duo" because they work so effectively on a variety of trout waters throughout the United States. They work exceptionally well on Pennsylvania streams. If you want to catch trout consistently and throughout the entire season, then you should try the dynamic duo.

The two patterns work effectively on streams in all areas of the state. Bryan Meck recently tested the duo one day on a fishing trip to Clarks Creek just north of Harrisburg. George Moffitt of Harrisburg and Dave Moffitt of Media, both great fly fishers, fished with Bryan and will vouch for this effective pattern. In a period of less than an hour of midsummer fly-fishing, Bryan caught six heavy trout in the delayed-harvest section of the stream. Brook, brown and rainbows took the Green Weenie on that hot afternoon.

I tried the dynamic duo on Fishing Creek's catch-and-release section in Columbia County late one summer afternoon. I'll never forget that experience. On the first cast into the head of a pool, several trout swirled around the sinking Green Weenie until one hit it. Before I left that one small pool, six trout took the sinking pattern and one took the dry fly. I've heard many other anglers who have tried the duo remark about trout swirling around the pattern.

One September day George Harvey, the venerable fly fisher from State College, and I fly fished Antis Creek just outside of Jersey Shore. Before we ended the fishing trip, George had landed more than a dozen trout on the Green Weenie, or as he calls it, the "Green Worm." That same day I had an angler come up and start talking to me. While we talked I let the Green Weenie sink to the bottom of a pool. A minute or two later I lifted the fly rod and felt a trout tugging on the fly. I set the hook and landed a 17-inch brown trout.

About a year ago Jack Conyngham, a long-time friend from Shavertown near Wilkes-Barre, asked me to meet him at the Wayne Harpster's fabulous section of Spruce Creek. Jack has fly fished for decades, long before this kind of fishing became the rage. Jack and noted author and photographer Larry Madison planned to fish this productive limestone stream and its trico hatch for a few days.

By the time the three of us arrived at the stream on this hot, muggy late-summer morning, female trico spinners already floated past us. Several large trout took up feeding positions directly under a willow tree just a few feet upstream from Jack. Jack made several floats over the risers. Then I tried for the trout. It seems that they had been fished over several times before and became wary of our trico patterns. Finally I asked Jack to try the dynamic duo—in the middle of a frustrating trico spinner fall. I rigged the two flies for Jack and asked him to practice a few casts with them. He then cast toward that same willow tree and what he saw astounded him. Two, three or four trout circled the sinking Green Weenie, and then one attacked it. Jack set the hook and fought the heavy rainbow for more than 10 minutes. He finally landed the 21-inch trout and shook my hand.

Two other trout took that pattern that late-summer morning before the three of us headed back to the cabin. Jack asked for a couple of the patterns so he could try them on trout streams near his home.

This past September when no hatch appeared on the water, I used the dynamic duo almost exclusively. In previous years when I caught a half-dozen trout on a day trout didn't rise, I considered myself lucky. With the two patterns it's not unusual to catch 15 or 20 trout in a half-day of fishing without the benefit of hatches.

What do fish think the Green Weenie is? One day I got the pattern hung up on a tree. When I went to release the Weenie from a leaf on the sycamore tree, I saw another green object, a green worm right next to the pattern. Both appeared to be about the same size, but the natural had a lighter green body than the pattern. I add a loop to my pattern.

The Green Weenie really works, especially in late summer. But that's only half the story. Recently Phil Hopersberger and I fished one late September afternoon. For more than an hour on the lower Bald Eagle I tossed the Patriot and Green Weenie into a productive riffle without any strikes. I knew the area held trout—I had caught and released more than 20 trout in this same riffle over the past month. Finally I tore the Green Weenie off and tied on a bead head pattern Walt Young had given me.

Walt and Steve Sywensky used the Bead Head Pheasant Tail nymph for most of the summer on central Pennsylvania's Spring Creek and found it to be one of the most productive patterns they had ever used. I tie the entire pattern out of pheasant tail.

I tie in the tail with four or five pheasant tail fibers, tie them off at the bend of the hook, and then continue to wind them up to the bead. Just behind the bead I add some additional pheasant tail fibers to form the hackle.

I cast the duo, now with a bead head used as the tail fly, in the same riffle that I had just fished for more than an hour. On the first cast I saw a swirl at the tandem. The third cast brought more movement around the bead head. I retrieved the flies and added a little lead just above the unweighed bead head. This extra bulk sank the nymph a bit more under the surface. On the first cast a heavy rainbow hit the bead head. Five more casts, the Patriot sank, I set the hook and landed a 15-inch brown. For the remainder of the afternoon the action continued on that bead head pattern.

Several other trips to Pennsylvania waters proved the worth of the Bead Head Pheasant Tail nymph. I told Craig Josephson of Johnstown about the nymph and he asked if he could join me on an early autumn trip to test the pattern. In one productive riffle Craig picked up more than a half-dozen brown trout on the bead head. After only an hour of fly fishing Craig became a believer in the pattern. Remember, all this action occurred in late September on a stream with no special regulations.

How much did the bead head increase my success? On one central Pennsylvania trout stream, with no restrictive regulations, I caught two 16-inch, two 19-inch and one 23-inch brown trout. All trout took the bead head in September and October—well after many anglers have quit for the year.

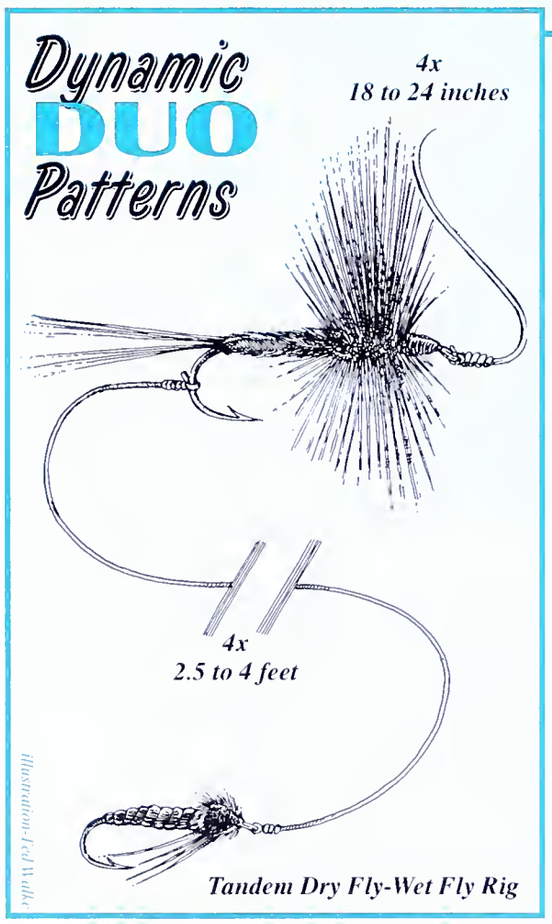
How much weight do you add to the sinking patterns? It depends on how deep you want the pattern to sink and what type of water you're fishing and when you're fishing it. If you're fishing deep water and you want the Green Weenie or bead head to get near the bottom, then use a pattern with 20 wraps of .015 wire wound around the body of the sinking pattern. Normally in the summer you don't have to go as deep as you do in fall and winter fishing. If you want the pattern to sink just under the surface, you might want to add just five to 10 wraps of .015 lead.

In fall and early spring when you find cold water, I fish the Green Weenie or bead head as deep as possible. In midwinter I often add a small splitshot just above the sinking pattern to get closer to the bottom. Rather than just two to three feet between patterns in the winter, I increase the distance to four feet or more. When fishing on the bottom in cold water you might find it easier just to use the Green Weenie or bead head. You'll reach more trout near the bottom more readily.

I usually use a 4X tippet ahead of and behind the Patriot. I've found that this diameter leader does not twist the line and makes casting much easier. Use a shorter tippet ahead of the Patriot. I usually use about an 18- or 24-inch tippet.

Take time to practice casting this rig. If you don't, you'll get the two patterns tangled. If you practice several times you'll see how easy it is to cast the two patterns. Don't forget—while your dry fly, the Patriot, floats drag-free on the surface, the sinking pattern, the Bead Head Pheasant Tail or the Green Weenie, drifts along or near the bottom also drag-free.

Do you want to increase the number of trout you catch? Do you want to catch larger trout? Then try the dynamic duo rig using the Patriot as a dry fly or strike indicator and the Green Weenie or Bead Head Pheasant Tail nymph as a sinking pattern. On those fall days (and for that matter, winter, spring and summer days, too) when there's no hatch on the water, try this rig before you quit. Once you've perfected this system, you, too, might experience one of the best fishing trips of the year.



Tandem Dry Fly-Wet Fly Rig

Patriot

Hook: Size 12 to size 14 dry fly.
Thread: Red.
Tails: Brown hackle fibers.
Body: Smolt-blue Krystal Flash wound around the shank. Wind some of the red thread in the middle of the shank similar to the Royal Coachman.
Wings: White impala or calf tail, divided.
Hackle: Brown.

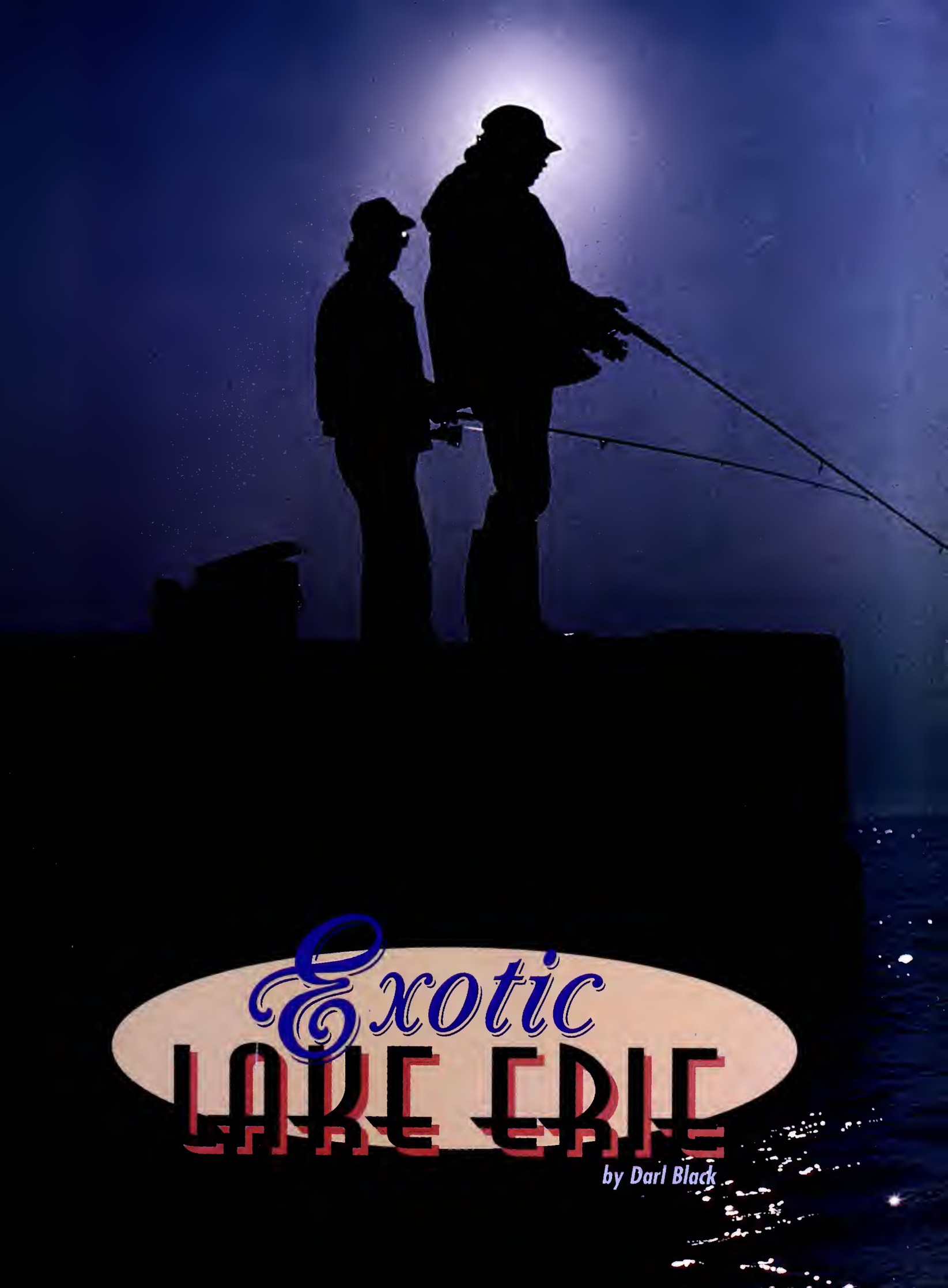
Bead-Head Pheasant-Tail Nymph

Hook: Tiemco 2457 size 12 to size 16.
Thorax: Copper bead, 1/8-inch.
Tails: Five or six fibers from a ringneck pheasant tail.
Body: Continue winding the pheasant tail fibers used to tie in the tail up to the bead and tie in.
Hackle: Take 10 pheasant tail fibers and tie in on the right side of the fly. Make the hackle about as long as the shank of the hook. Move the hackle around the hook to fill in the right side of the fly. Take 10 more pheasant tail fibers and tie in on the left side. Pull on the hackle to fill in the left side.

Green Weenie

Hook: Size 10 to size 12 Mustad 9672.
Body: Cut off a five-inch piece of small or medium chartreuse-green chenille. Form a small loop with the chenille extending out over the bend of the hook. Then wrap the chenille around the shank of the hook up to the eye.

photo-Darl Black



Exotic LAKE ERIE

by Darl Black



photo-Darl Black

Anglers gather near the mouth of Walnut Creek.

"The sky is falling, the sky is falling," cried Chicken Little, running frantically about the barnyard. But the sky really wasn't falling.

"The Redcoats are coming, the Redcoats are coming," warned Paul Revere on his midnight ride. And they did.

When discussing the future of Lake Erie, fisheries managers do not want to sound like Chicken Little proclaiming the end of the world. Yet, there is growing concern among fisheries biologists that the Redcoats may be just around the corner.

"No one likes to go out and beat the drum predicting major changes in the Great Lakes," says Roger Kenyon, Commission Fisheries Biologist and leader of the Lake Erie Research Section. "But I suspect we are seeing some significant changes right now. I don't know what effect it will have on important species of gamefish. For now, there is enough food in the lake. However, if the shifts we are observing continue for a few years, there will be a big problem."

In part, some of these changes are brought about by unwanted exotic species in the Great Lakes. The most notorious intruder of recent years has been the zebra mussel.

The sudden appearance of the alien mussel in Lake St. Clair during 1988, and its subsequent rapid spread throughout the lower Great Lakes, set off alarms. End-of-the-world forecasts from Chicken Little followers were heard all over the Great Lakes region. For the most part, fisheries managers, although voicing genuine concern, did not join in the doom and gloom. They wanted to see evidence, not just supposition.

Zebra mussels (*Drissena polymorpha*) apparently arrived from Europe in the ballast water of an ocean freighter, most likely in a free-swimming larval stage.

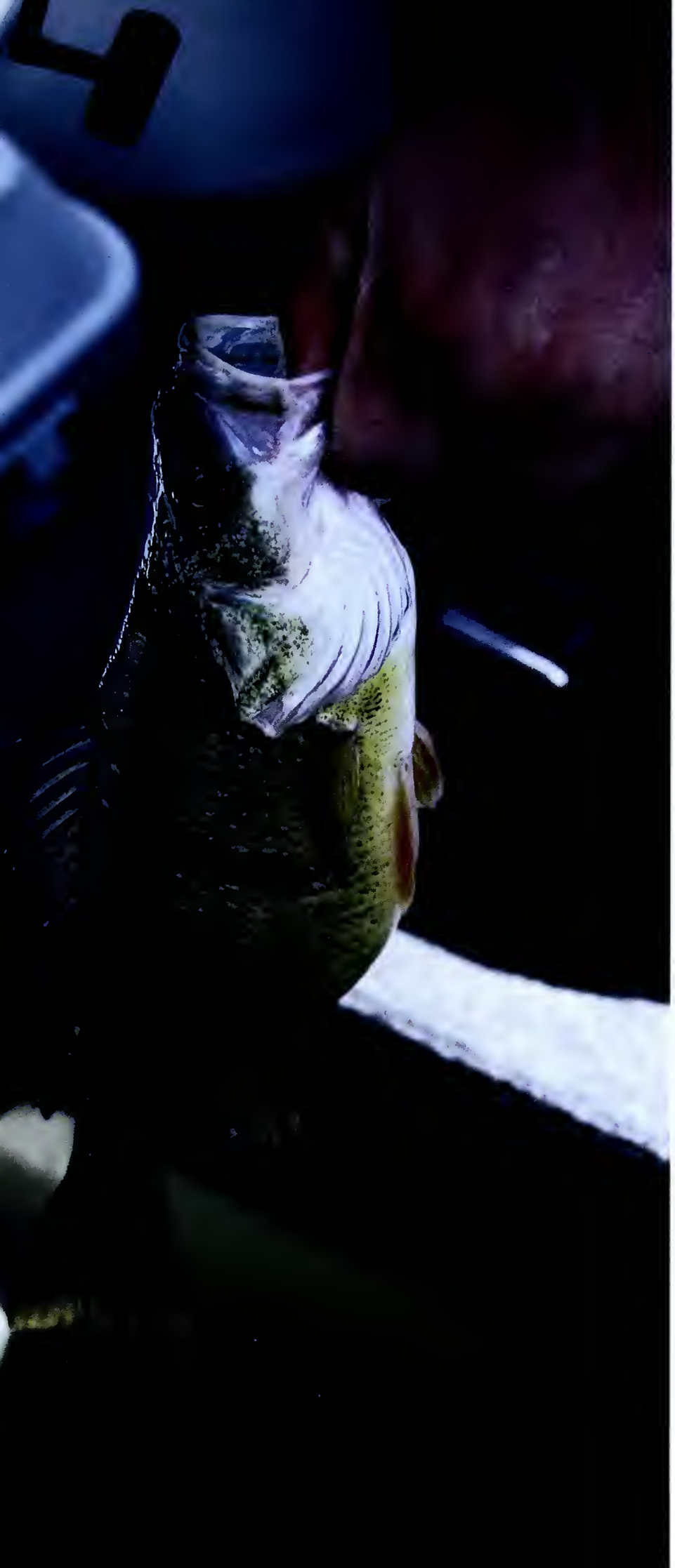
The mussels had spread from their Caspian Sea home throughout Europe during the late 1700s by way of new canal systems. Considered a fact of life in Europe for 200 years, the mussels were unwelcome in the U.S. and Canada. But it's the critter's propensity for feeding on microscopic organic matter, not the fact it slipped into the country without a green card, that upset the angling community.

According to research documents, each adult mussel is capable of filtering about one liter of water per day. Nearly all particulate matter—including virtually all phytoplankton and some forms of zooplankton—are removed. Plankton is a crucial link in the aquatic food chain. Because this little mollusk is so efficient at removing tiny organic matter, biologists feared that colonization by zebra mussels across the Great Lakes would severely limit the food base for all fish in a short time.

Furthermore, in the larval stage the critters attach themselves to any firm surface, develop a bi-shell, and grow to one to two inches in size very quickly, maturing in one year. Encrustations of mussel colonies can interfere with water intake systems—from openings as small as water cooling intakes for gas motors on boats to expansive systems of large intake pipes for cities and industries. Since the late 1980s, Great Lakes communities have paid a high price to keep their systems zebra-free.

"LAKE ERIE IS IN A CONTINUAL STATE OF FLUX, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF UNDESIRABLE EXOTICS," SAYS KENYON. "MANY PEOPLE ASSUME WE CAN STABILIZE THE SYSTEM. I DON'T THINK WE CAN."

photo-Darl Black



An adult zebra mussel can produce as many as 40,000 eggs each year. Spawning occurs when water temperature is above 54 degrees, peaking at about 64 degrees. The free-swimming larva, called veligers, move with currents until they settle on a firm surface. The surface may be rocks, wrecks, trash, boat hulls, pipes, vegetation or native mussels. In some areas of the Great Lakes, entire communities of native mussels have been exterminated by the foreign invaders.

Besides filtering valuable plankton, another fear has been the decomposition of the mussel's waste material. While straining water, zebra mussels remove literally all material—far more than they need to convert to growth energy. The unused nutrients and inorganic matter are bonded together with mucus and discarded as pseudofeces. It was thought the pseudofeces could degrade the rocky spawning shoal environment for other species, particularly walleyes.

Quagga mussel

During 1993, a second European mussel called the "quagga" (closely related to the zebra mussel) was identified in the lower Great Lakes system. This mussel shows a preference for a different substrate, growing on soft surfaces such as sand and mud. Also, the quagga lives in much deeper, colder water than the zebra.

As potentially upsetting as the European mussels may be to the Great Lakes ecosystem, some pseudo-scientists and tourism promoters have tried to put a different slant on the mussel invasion by pointing to the increased clarity of Lake Erie.

"By filtering out particulate matter, mussels are increasing the clarity. Clearer water must mean cleaner water," claim the spin doctors. "Isn't that what you want for swimming, boating and fishing?"

Kenyon warns, "Increased lake transparency, that is, clarity, is not necessarily a good thing. Clearer water translates to less phytoplankton and zooplankton in the lake."

Bio basics

Endowed with nutrients, Lake Erie has maintained the most productive fisheries per acre of all Great Lakes. Every amateur biologist understands the basic aquatic life-chain structure: Nutrients feed phytoplankton; phytoplankton feed zooplankton; zooplankton feed minnows and juvenile fish; small fish feed big fish. The amount of nutrient available in the water system is based on the ratio of nitrogen and phosphorus in the water. Nitrogen is generally abundant in freshwater, so phosphorus is considered the limiting, or controlling, factor in the equation.

When too much phosphorus is present, thick algal blooms occur. Such was the state of Lake Erie in the 1960s. The lake was too rich. Nu-

Exotic LAKE ERIE

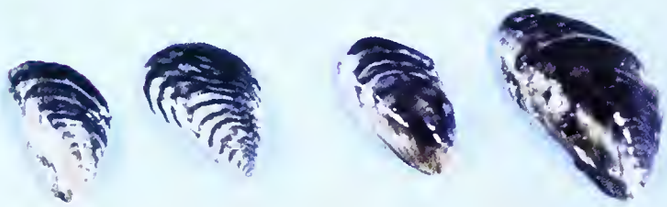


photo-Darl Black

Exotics in Pennsylvania's Inland Waters



Zebra mussel



Quagga mussel

Commission Area Fisheries Mangers are holding their breath. So far no colonies of European mussels (zebra or quagga) have shown up in the inland waters of the Commonwealth. However, everyone knows it is inevitable. But the longer the mussel invasion is delayed, the more likely research will find ways to deal effectively with them.

"While the mussels have been found in the upper Susquehanna watershed in New York, having come down the Oswego Canal from Ontario, there has been no sign of them in Pennsylvania's section of the Susquehanna," says Andy Shiels, Commission biologist serving on several interstate committees on exotics and endangered species.

"Our first concern for inland waters is that zebra mussels would compete with native mussel species. They will take away food and actually colonize right on top of native mussel beds. French Creek in the Allegheny drainage is of particular concern because of its great diversity of native species."

Because the mussels have not shown up yet in Pennsylvania's inland waters as they have in every other Great Lake state, some credit must go to Keystone State boaters and anglers who have been responsibly following recommendations to slow the spread of the critters. These include no transportation of livewell or baitbucket water from the Great Lakes to inland waters, scrubbing the hulls of boats coming from the Great Lakes, and draining all water or disinfecting with bleach all sources of trapped water in the boat.

EVERYONE KNOWS IT IS INEVITABLE. BUT THE LONGER THE MUSSEL INVASION IS DELAYED, THE MORE LIKELIHOOD RESEARCH WILL FIND WAYS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THEM.

trient overload can be a killer for fish life as the abundance of phytoplankton saps the oxygen from the water.

The opposite is also true. When too few nutrients are present, the lake slides toward sterility. No food, no fish.

Recent studies in New York and Ohio indicate greatly reduced counts of certain kinds of plankton. The ever-popular pointed finger turned toward the filter-feeding zebra mussel.

According to Kenyon, there is little doubt that zebra mussels are diverting food that could be used by fish. But the exact effect on desired fish species is unknown at this point.

"The latest studies I have reviewed indicate the zebra and quagga mussels do not entrain as much of the food resources and primary productivity as once thought," says Kenyon. "This is largely because the mussels are so close to the bottom and cannot filter the upper lays of water. The entire lake's water mass does not circulate across the bottom because of seasonal stratification."

It seems the original theory that colonization by the mussels throughout the lake would filter the entire volume of Erie every so many days simply has not proved to be true.

"Nonetheless, everyone keeps bringing up water clarity," says Kenyon. "Zebra mussels probably have something to do with transparency simply by their sheer numbers. However, the lake transparency started improving before the mussels showed up. There is evidence that the reduction of phosphorus entering the lower Great Lakes system is the underlying reason for the improved water clarity."

Bill Culligan, Lake Erie biologist for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC), expresses a similar viewed based on his regular plankton surveys. "There is a downward trend in plankton in Lake Erie, but it has not been a sharp drop, yet. I can't say it is strictly caused by zebra mussels because the slide started before the mussels appeared. Exactly what are critical levels of plankton needed to sustain recreational fisheries is hard to say. I do know we are seeing historic low levels of phosphorus in the lake, and there is concern we could be approaching a sterile lake."

The poor water quality of Erie in the 1960s was a major impetus for federal and state phosphorus reduction programs. The success of municipal sewage treatment plant improvement, control of industry waste water, and improved farming methods to curtail runoff have been slowly taking care of the overabundance of phosphorus. The Federal Clean Water Act of 1972 reduced the phosphorus dumped into Lake Erie from 28,000 metric tons in 1968 to less than 10,000 metric tons in recent years, according to the Ohio Sea Grant.

Kenyon points out that increased transparency would be an expected benefit of phosphorus reduction, but increased water clarity is happening quicker than anticipated. The plankton-feeding exotic species—zebra and quagga mussels, and spiny water flea—are probably responsible for accelerating lake transparency, but phosphorus reduction programs are responsible over the long haul.

However, there is danger ahead, according to Kenyon.

"I don't think anyone thought we would get this far this quickly," says Kenyon. "But there are water quality people who want to go a step further. Many of these people see their charge as eliminating phosphorus entering the lake system. Some claim phosphorus should be ruled a contaminant. That would mean they are on a course to reduce phosphorus to 0 levels. That could be disastrous!

"Fisheries people believe we have gone the extra mile in reducing unnecessary phosphorus. To go another mile may be jeopardizing current fish productivity, or holding the lake hostage to some revision in terms of Erie's potential fish production. We don't want to lose or adversely alter the potential of the lake to produce stable fish stocks."

Recent studies reveal slower than normal growth rates in Erie's smelt and yellow perch, which may be early signs of too little phytoplankton.

Are those who push for more reduction in phosphorus some group of radical environmental zealots? Kenyon does not see it that way. The water quality people he encounters are from the Environmental Protection Agency and various international environmental commissions. Kenyon says to get the point across about needed levels of phosphorus, fisheries managers today are talking a lot more with water quality people than ever before. They have joint workshops and planning sessions. Most water quality people are beginning to understand the whole picture, including nutrients needed to sustain fish. According to Kenyon, all sides must communicate better than in the past to prevent a new crisis.

The massive Great Lakes system would be difficult enough to manage even without the introduction of non-native critters. Some exotic species, such as the pacific salmon and steelhead, have been intentionally introduced with the expectation of increasing sportfishing opportunities. Others, such as the sea lamprey, white perch and alewife, have been accidental. Whereas the lamprey has been a negative for gamefish, the alewife has apparently benefited the fisheries by adding usable forage. White perch seems to have been a wash—no benefit, no drastic negatives other than being a nuisance for anglers. It's still too soon to know the final word on the recent arrivals—zebra/quagga mussels, ruffe and spiny water flea.

"On top of everything, we have two entirely different governmental policies operating on the lake concerning certain species," says Kenyon. "An example is the smelt. Currently smelt are very unstable, with populations way down. Ontario wants to use all the smelt for commercial purposes to sell to international markets. The U.S. wants to use smelt to feed sportfishes. There lies yet another major conflict.

"Lake Erie is in a continual state of flux, especially in light of undesirable exotics," says Kenyon. "Many people assume we can stabilize the system. I don't think we can. Look at the sea lamprey. Initially, the talk was 'eradication.' Then the plan was to 'control' it. Now we must settle for 'managing' the sea lamprey. That is the same thing that will happen with the other exotics like the ruffe and zebra mussel."

Mahoning Creek

From Valier downstream through the village of Hamilton and for several miles past the village of North Point in northeast Indiana County, the Mahoning offers very good bass fishing in its rocky flats and pocket water.

by Robert L. Petri



photo-Robert L. Petri

For generations the steep hillsides of Indiana, Armstrong and Jefferson counties surrendered much of the coal that stoked the furnaces of the steel mills of Johnstown, Pittsburgh and a host of other cities that sit fast along the banks of such major western Pennsylvania waterways as the Conemaugh, the Monongahela and, of course, the Allegheny. The mills helped bring prosperity and progress to the region, and western Pennsylvania was changed forever.

But progress brings a price tag. Many beautiful waterways of Pennsylvania's coal country ran red and lifeless, poisoned by the deadly seepage of mine acid from a thousand sources.

Today, there is a growing list of which we in Pennsylvania can be proud. It consists of the waterways, large and small, that concerted efforts by govemment, citizens groups and the coal industry itself have helped to reclaim. In rivers like the Clarion, the Youghiogheny and others, fish now swim and wildlife flourishes where not so long ago, there was nothing. Much remains to be done to ensure that these and other Pennsylvania waters will not be lost again, but we have made an impressive beginning.

Not the least of these minor miracles of restoration and healing took place on the broad, tumbling reaches of westcentral Pennsylvania's Mahoning Creek. Today, in the heart of coal country, this major waterway provides excellent angling over a wide array of gamefish. Trout flourish in the cool flows of the headwaters branches, and in the upper sections of the stream's main tributary, Little Mahoning Creek. The middle and lower reaches of Mahoning Creek provide one of the best stream smallmouth bass fisheries in the region. Northern pike, muskies and walleyes can be found in fishable numbers throughout the lower reaches of the stream.

It was not always so. According to Fish and Boat Commission Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, the majority of the Mahoning Creek watershed was a mine acid wasteland well into the late 1950s. Mahoning Creek Lake, an 800-acre impoundment constructed on the stream's middle reaches by the Army Corps of Engineers, remained virtually fishless through a good portion of the 1960s. However, the closing of abandoned mines and the reclamation of other sites that were contributing to the depression of aquatic life in the stream began to change the luck of the Mahoning over the years. As the 1970s passed, life began to return to Mahoning Creek in a big way. The June 1984 *Pennsylvania Angler* contains a comprehensive listing and general assessment of Pennsylvania's warmwater fisheries. The lower 35 miles of Mahoning Creek were identified as an above-average smallmouth fishery. The lower 22 miles, from Mahoning Creek Lake to the Allegheny River, received the same recognition for its angling potential for northerns and muskies, as well as bass. Although a decade has passed since this assessment by Commission biologists, the quality of the lower Mahoning fishery remains essentially the same today.

Beginnings

Mahoning Creek begins in a remote corner of westem Clearfield County, tight against the breakline between the Allegheny and Susquehanna watersheds. It flows westward on a 50-mile joumey across Jefferson, Indiana and Armstrong counties to meet the Allegheny River near the village of Templeton in northcentral Armstrong County.

The past and the future meet head on when the two streams that form the upper Mahoning join just upstream from the village of Big Run in eastem Jefferson County. Stump Creek, which enters from the north, continues to carry enough mine acid to severely depress its own aquatic life. The East Branch of Mahoning Creek, which enters from the southeast, contributes relatively cold, clean water to the newly formed main stem of Mahoning Creek. The addition of the flow of Big Run at the village of the same name further enhances the water quality in the main stem.

Both the East Branch and Big Run are characterized by Area Fisheries Manager Ron Lee as "good trout streams for their area." Both are stocked by the Fish and Boat Commission, and offer decent trout angling well into the hot months of summer.

The two streams are very different in size and character. The East Branch is a fairly large waterway, occasionally exceeding 50 feet in width. There are many long pools and excellent holding water over the stream's eight-mile-plus stocked section. Some of the East Branch's small tributaries harbor fishable populations of native brook trout, most notably the small but beautiful Laurel Run.

Big Run is a smaller, more intimate waterway that tumbles from the north to meet the Mahoning about six miles upstream from Punxsutawney. Seldom exceeding 20 feet in width and well-shaded over its length, it is perhaps the best late-summer bet for trout angling in the upper Mahoning Creek watershed. Al Gretz is a pharmacist and photographer who lives in nearby Oliveburg. For years, he has been one of the prime movers in the Allegheny Mountain Chapter of Trout Unlimited, which operates in the DuBois-Punxsutawney area. Allegheny Mountain TU has a long-standing stream improvement project on the waters of Big Run. The group has installed jackdams, deflectors and other devices to improve and stabilize trout habitat. Today, according to Gretz, a modest but stable population of wild brook and brown trout inhabits the stream. These fish combine with a good holdover of stocked fish from the spring to produce a viable late-summer fishery.

Anglers tend to be secretive about important things like little-known hotspots. However, if you frequent the places in and around Punxsutawney where fishemen meet to compare notes, you may hear rumors of trout fishing of another sort. While not stocked with catchable trout, Mahoning Creek in the section from Big Run to Punxsutawney has been known to produce some truly huge brown trout in excess of 20 inches. Al Gretz believes that these fish may be a result of a fingerling plant that took place some years ago in the wake of a railroad accident that poisoned a section of Mahoning Creek near Big Run. Area Fisheries Manager Lee also notes the same reports of huge Mahoning Creek trout, but did not hazard an opinion on their origin. Wherever they came from, these fish are available to anglers who fish the main stem during the spring, and to fishermen who search for them during summer and autumn in Big Run and the East Branch. The fish ascend these streams to escape the high summer water temperatures in Mahoning Creek, and to seek suitable spawning sites in the autumn.

Access to Mahoning Creek and its tribs above Punxsutawney is relatively good, and is made easier by the presence of US Route 119, which parallels the stream. Lesser roads follow both Big Run and the East Branch up into their headwaters and provide access.

Warmwater fishery

The upper watershed features a decent summer trout fishery, but the best that Mahoning Creek has to offer begins as the stream leaves Punxsutawney and swings on a looping southwesterly path into northem Indiana County. The water slows and warms somewhat, and an excellent warmwater fishery begins to emerge. Even though northern pike, muskies and some walleyes are found in this section, smallmouth bass provide the most angling excitement throughout these waters. They are present in large numbers all the way from Punxsutawney to the backwaters of Mahoning Creek Lake, a distance of approximately 24 miles.

As the Mahoning approaches the small village of Valier in southem Jefferson County, the slow, deep character of the stream

Mahoning Creek

begins to give way to a section of somewhat steeper gradient, and there are long sections of classic riffle-pool water. This kind of water draws smallmouth bass, especially in summer, and the bass angling improves accordingly. From Valier downstream through the village of Hamilton and for several miles past the village of North Point in northeast Indiana County, the Mahoning offers very good bass fishing in its rocky flats and pocket water.

A series of township and legislative routes that branch off of routes 210 and 954 southwest of Punxsutawney provides the best access to these middle reaches of Mahoning Creek. In many sections, these roads parallel the stream to provide access. There are bridges at Valier, Hamilton and North Point as you continue downstream. All the properties along this portion of the stream are privately owned, but are for the most part open to fishing.

A short distance above the point where the backwaters of Mahoning Creek Lake capture the stream's flow, Mahoning Creek is joined by the considerable volume of its largest tributary, Little Mahoning Creek. Approximately 20 miles of the Little Mahoning in Indiana County, from Decker's Point downstream to near Smicksburg, are stocked with trout. The summer angler, however, should concentrate on a four-mile delayed-harvest, flies-only project near the village of Rochester Mills in the stream's upper reaches. In these project waters, Commission special regulations combine with the outstanding stream improvement efforts of the Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited under the auspices of the Commission's "Adopt-a-Stream" program to ensure good fishing over decent numbers of trout even in the heat of August. Access to the Little Mahoning project is via SR 1034 or SR 1038 near Rochester Mills. US 119 provides access to both these roads.

Not far below the Little Mahoning junction, the now sizable main stream is impounded by the 800-acre expanse of Mahoning Creek Lake. According to Area Fisheries Manager Lee, the lake has enjoyed the same fisheries renaissance over the years as Mahoning Creek itself. Lee calls Mahoning Creek Lake a "very good fishery." He cites Commission surveys indicating good populations of "quality size" largemouth and smallmouth bass. He also notes that even though the populations of panfish, muskies and northerns are not as robust as that of the bass, some individuals of these species are also large. For anglers who wish to sample the flatwater angling in Mahoning Creek Lake, there is a public boat launch located on the upper reaches of the impoundment off Route 839 north of Dayton in Armstrong County.

Smallmouths

My favorite section of Mahoning Creek begins at the outflow of the lake near McCrea Furnace in Armstrong County and continues for 22 miles to the Allegheny River. Here the Mahoning is wide and strong, with numerous heavy riffles, long, rocky flats and lots of good cover for the excellent smallmouth population that inhabits the stream. Mahoning Creek averages 70 to 100 feet wide in much of this section as it wind down a narrow valley of forests, small farms and crossroads villages. The vast majority of the stream is easily waded, and wet-wading the riffles and shallow pools of the Mahoning in the shadows of the streamside hemlocks and hardwoods is an excellent way to beat the heat on a muggy August evening.

Access to this section of Mahoning Creek is somewhat limited by a lack of paralleling roads and by fewer bridge crossings than in the Punxsutawney to Mahoning Creek Lake section of the stream. There is still more than adequate access if you take the time to seek it. Bridges at McCrea Furnace, Eddyville and Putneyville, all in Armstrong County, offer points of stream access. At Putneyville, a small community park offers some parking and access to one of the more productive sections of Mahoning Creek. At Mahoning Furnace, on Route 28/66 south of the village of Distant, there is also limited access at the highway bridge located there. From this bridge to the Allegheny, access becomes more difficult as few roads cross or come near the stream. Just above the Mahoning's junction with the river near Templeton, a state game lands road runs close to the stream for a short distance, and offers some access.

Late summer is a prime time for sampling the smallmouth fishing in Mahoning Creek, and visiting anglers can do well with almost any kind of tackle and methods including live bait, small spinning lures or flies and poppers. More critical than bait or lure selection to success on these waters during the usual low flows of late summer is your approach to the stream. The most wary brown trout is no more skittery than a stream smallmouth in low water conditions. Wade deliberately and carefully as you approach likely holding water, and try to keep your disturbance of the stream to a minimum.

Smallmouth bass are gregarious creatures, and where you find one, there will usually be others. Pay close attention to areas of moderate flow where rocks and other debris like sunken logs create breaks in the current where the bass can sit and wait to ambush drifting food items. The best of these areas is located in pools and flats that average three to four feet in depth. If these rocky flats are close to riffled water, as is so often the case in Mahoning Creek, they become even better areas to prospect. In summer, bass are drawn by the higher oxygen content of these areas immediately below sections of broken water.

Sunlight and shadow also play big roles when it comes to locating Mahoning Creek bass. Stream smallmouth greatly dislike direct sunlight during the warm days of late summer, and will avoid it when possible. This makes overcast days the best bet for good all-day fishing. When the sun is out, look for the bass to move to areas where streamside trees create a zone of shade along the banks. In these shaded areas, remember that the same rules of cover apply as in the rest of the stream. A shaded, rock and log-strewn bank is much more likely to be productive than a similarly shaded bank with little or no cover.

The principal forage available to the bass in Mahoning Creek includes crayfish, minnows and other small fish and aquatic insects and their immature forms. More than a few errant frogs and mice accidentally drop into the water and become fair game for the feeding bass. Anglers intent on a successful outing should choose their baits or lures with all these food forms in mind.

Lure fishermen can rely on small crankbaits to produce action. The best colors are a rusty brown, a dark mossy green or a burnt orange, all of which imitate the natural shades of Mahoning Creek crayfish. Small balsa wood minnow imitations retrieved in a herky-jerky fashion past in-stream cover are deadly, as are eighth-ounce jigs with tails in shades of yellow, white and smoke. While any spinning or spincast tackle you choose can deliver there lures effectively, Mahoning Creek bass put on their best show when taken on light or ultralight tackle.



photos-Mark A. Nale; graphic-Ted Walke





Tempting fish with the actual critters they feed on is the oldest form of angling, and in many ways is still the most effective. Try drifting a live minnow or small crayfish on a size 4 bait hook along the shaded streambanks or through the numerous Mahoning Creek rock gardens. Nightcrawlers work well, too, but expect a lot of unwelcome business from the large numbers of shiners and chubs in the stream. In deeper or faster water, add a few small splitshot to get your bait near the bottom. Takes are often subtle. Stay in touch with your bait by keeping the slack out of your line.

If you are on the Mahoning and the bass fishing slows, don't forget that the stream also holds decent numbers of northerns, muskies and walleyes. Look for these fish in the deeper, slower sections and pools. According to Area Fisheries Manager Lee, as the sauger continues its advance up the Allegheny watershed, it, too, will soon be a part of the Mahoning Creek mix, adding yet another dimension to this already excellent fishery.

Help celebrate the continuing renewal of another of the waterways of Pennsylvania's coal country. Sample for yourself the excellent and varied Mahoning Creek fishery.

Tailwater Trout

Through the efforts of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, a newcomer is well on its way to establishing itself as a part of the Mahoning Creek fishery. According to Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, fingerling brown trout plants have been made in the tailwaters of Mahoning Creek Lake for the past five years. According to Lee, this section of the stream just below the dam meets most of the criteria for good holding water for trout. There are abundant riffles, a good amount of cover and the forage base necessary to support trout.

Lee reports that the status of the Mahoning Creek tailwaters trout fishery will be surveyed in 1994, and future management decisions regarding the program will be made at that time. He also reports that angler surveys and reports indicate that the program has been successful to date, with a number of anglers reporting good catches of trout in the stream below Mahoning Creek Lake. All in all, the future of this new addition to the Mahoning Creek fishery seems bright.–*RLP.*

DROP IN
on Fall Crappies

by Darl Black



photos-Darl Black

Springtime is traditionally viewed as crappie time by the majority of anglers, but my favorite season for crappie fishing is fall.

Fall has a number of things going for it. First, there are fewer anglers on the water, so you are less likely to find another boat working your crappie spot. Second, the fish are not as skittish partly because of reduced angling pressure, but mainly because the crappie schools are located in deeper water than spring. Next, crappie schools concentrate on structure as the cooling trend progresses, and once set on an area by mid-fall, they generally remain there until ice forms. Finally, after a summer of feeding on plentiful baitfish, the biggest crappies of the entire year are taken in the fall. That's four good reasons to drop in on fall crappies.

Natural process

Fall is a time of change, but the changes are far more than leaves turning colors, fading to brown, and finally dropping from the trees. It is the loss of thermal stability that affects creatures the most, both directly and indirectly. The hours of daylight get noticeably shorter as the sun's path across the sky sinks lower in the horizon. Less direct sun rays slowly result in warm September daytime temperatures turning to crisp October temperatures, and eventually to cold November temperatures.

During the summer, the lake's crappie population has been broken into many small schools spread over a variety of habitat. Depending on the particular characteristics and water color of the lake or reservoir, crappies may have been relating to rocky riprap and breakwalls, suspended in the open water off weedlines or humps, stacked on bridge pilings, suspended in the center of creek channels, hugging brushpiles on mid-depth flats, or any of a half-dozen other possible locations. Basically summer is considered a period of stable routines for fish.

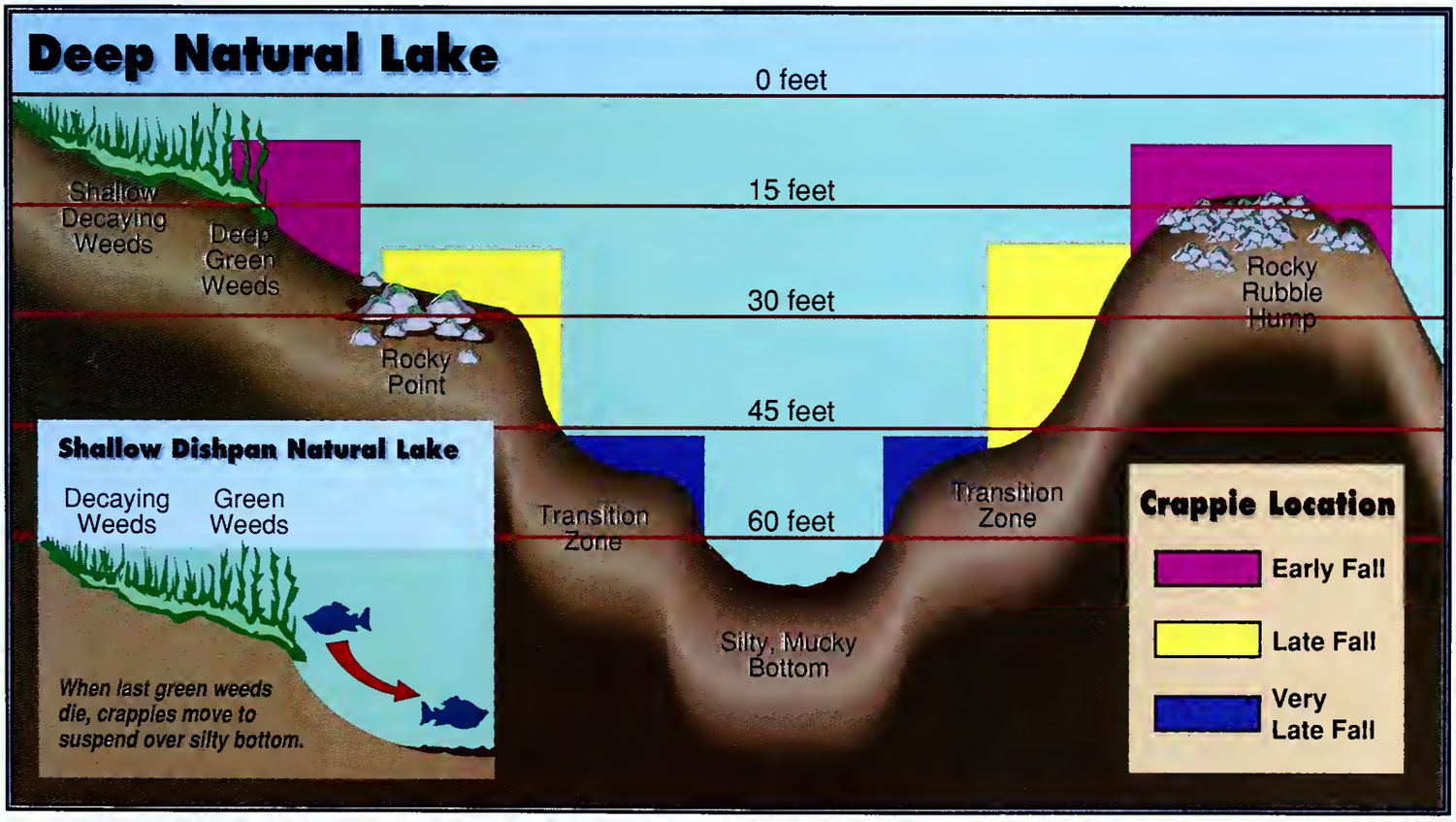
But as the lake's environment changes in the fall, fish patterns are altered. To capitalize on the emerging fall patterns, anglers need to understand the shifts that occur with regard to fish location. Falling water temperature results in the breakdown of thermal stratification as well as the loss of growing vegetation. In some reservoirs, a dropping water level caused by draw-down is a contributing factor to location changes.

The fall turnover perhaps has the most significant effect on crappie location in deep waterways. During the summer, many large impoundments become stratified by temperature. The warm upper layer (the epilimnion) remains separated from the cold bottom layer (the hypolimnion) because cold water is heavier than warm water. The band of rapid temperature change between these two distinct layers is referred to as the thermocline. The temperature layers form a barrier that restricts warmwater fish, including crappies, to the upper layer. Therefore, crappies are rarely found deeper than 25 feet during the summer, even though a lake is considerably deeper.

As surface water cools in the fall, it sinks, forcing warmer water to the surface. The epilimnion soon mixes with the thermocline, and eventually with the coldest waters of the hypolimnion. At some point the lake temperature theoretically becomes uniform from top to bottom, and the stratification is broken—at least for a short period.

Even though every impounded body of water develops distinct summer stratification, the cooling water in the fall nonetheless homogenizes the entire lake. Warmwater fish become acclimated to the gradually cooler water temperatures. And now with a shot of fresh oxygen injected into deeper water by the mixing, fish are able to move into deeper regions of the lake.

On lakes with lush aquatic vegetation, fish are also forced out of the shallows. The cooling water temperatures, coupled with shorter periods of daylight, kills most aquatic vegetation. This first starts with the shallowest vegetation and eventually affects deeper vegetation. Decaying vegetation uses up dissolved oxygen in the immediate vicinity, thereby forcing baitfish and gamefish from shallow weedy cover. While on most lakes, the shallow vegetation hosts only a limited number of crappies during



graphic-Ted Walke

the summer, those which reside there are forced to slightly deeper water. The drawdown on flood control reservoirs has the same effect, pushing fish from the rapidly receding shallows toward deeper water.

At the same time, roaming schools of suspended crappies gravitate toward structure as the water cools. Some studies have indicated that on very large reservoirs, crappies that spent the summer on the main lake now move into large bays or arms. This is generally in response to gizzard shad moving toward the creek arms.

With extremely shallow crappies flushed from cover and open-water suspended fish moving to structure, the result is a much higher concentration of crappies at specific sites. During the early fall period, these fish are finding their way to the best spots. But as fall progresses, crappies gradually shift deeper and their holding sites become even more defined.

Early fall presentations

By early October, changes in the aquatic environment are affecting crappies. Location varies somewhat, depending on whether the body of water is a natural lake or a manmade reservoir.

On natural lakes with abundant vegetation, the most obvious area to begin looking for early fall crappies is the deep weed edge. The better spots are defined weed edges, usually in 8 to 14 feet of water. Shallow bay fish are pushed to healthier green weeds in deeper water, while open-water suspended fish move toward the weedline. Pay particular attention to protrusion or intrusions on large weedy flats, as well as where rocky bottoms meet weed edges. The crappies are usually hugging the weed edge.

If unable to pinpoint crappies on the weed edge, check out points with rocky outcroppings or rock piles not far from the weedbeds. Other sites on natural lakes to investigate in the early fall are deep dock pilings, sunken boats, or man-introduced brushpiles in 8 to 20 feet of water—if you know where these structures are located. Midlake humps (sunken islands) are generally holding crappies this time of year, too, with schools somewhere near the top of the hump.

In manmade impoundments during the early fall, crappies are generally gravitating toward the secondary creek channels. Some of these fish are moving from the very shallow coves to intermediate depths. Others follow baitfish from deeper water toward shallower water. "Secondary channels" refer to tributary creeks meandering through large bays or arms of reservoirs, as opposed to the main river channel in the center of the impoundment.

However, if it is a small, relatively shallow impoundment (let's say, less than 25 feet maximum depth), the crappies may move directly to the main channel. The key sites along channels include old bridge foundations, stump rows and especially channel bends. Many of these sites hosted some crappies during the summer, but the numbers of fish increase in the fall.

The sites for early fall crappies are varied, although reduced from dozens of summer possibilities. Even though the fish are generally in a feeding mode, they can be moody at times. Some days the fishing can be great, and the next day the bite is off.

These crappies can be taken on standard panfish presentations, including bobber-and-minnow or a jig. But locating fish is crucial. I find the bobber-and-minnow too slow as a search method for crappies. Jigs always work, of course, but I prefer a jig alternative that can be fished quickly.

For water depths from 8 to 15 feet, my first choice is a versatile jig-spinner. These are leadheads with a swivel and spinner blade attached to the bottom of the jighead. The body is ei-

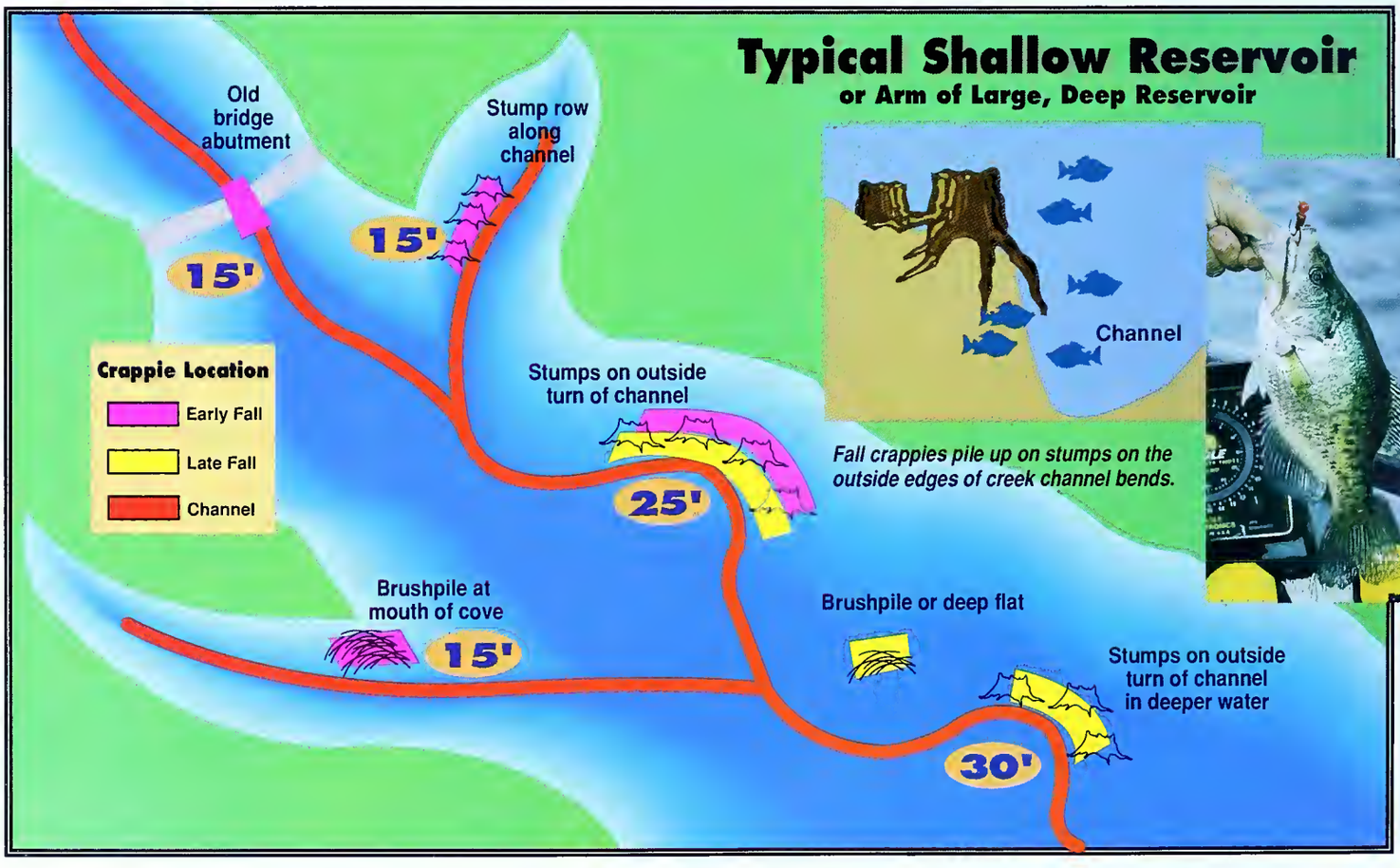


photo-Dan Black; graphic-Ted Walke

ther a soft plastic grub or marabou feathers. I do not tip the jig-spinner with a minnow, although you may do so if a bit of confidence is needed.

Examples of this kind of bait are Blakemore's Road Runner, Bass Pro Shop's Original Stump Jumper, and Walleyes Only's Flash Jig. Because of increased attraction through blade flash and vibration, I believe the jig-spinner can be fished a little faster than an ordinary panfish jig, thereby covering more water in the search of active crappies. When I catch a crappie, I slow down, cover the area thoroughly, and I may even change to a still-fishing presentation, such as a bobber and minnow.

There are two basic retrieves I use for a jig-spinner. First is the steady do-nothing retrieve. The lure is cast and counted down to the desired depth. The rod tip is held low and the lure retrieved with a slow, steady turning of the reel handle.

The second retrieve is only a slight modification. The lure is worked slowly, but every 6 to 8 feet the rod tip is snapped upward several inches in rapid succession to give a darting baitfish appearance. The rod twitches are followed by a pause of several seconds as the lure drops back to the desired depth before the steady retrieve is started again.

Late-fall presentations

As the water temperature continues to decline through October, the concentrations of crappies tend to increase at particular sites.

On natural lakes that lack deeper structure elements, crappies may hold near the last green weeds on the outside weed line right up to ice-up. But on other lakes, crappies shift to deeper sites on the same structural configurations or they may completely abandon the shore-connected elements for midlake humps.

On lakes with deep shore-connected structures, crappies move away from the weed edge to rocky-rubble points, perhaps as deep as 30 feet. However, my best crappie spots on natural lakes in the late fall are offshore humps. These are humps with crests too deep for summer vegetation. That translates to a top no shallower than 12 or 15 feet of water. Sometimes the crappies feed near the crest of the humps in 15 to 20 feet, but the more likely spot to find them is 25 to 35 feet on the steepest drop of the hump.

If mild weather permits fishing opportunities well into December, frequently the last spot to find concentrations of crappies in natural lakes is the transition zone around points and humps where the firm bottom changes to silty muck in the lake basin. On lakes I fish, this occurs somewhere between 30 and 45 feet.

In the deep waters of natural lakes, my search lure for crappies is either a blade bait or a jigging spoon. I jig these hard-metal lures vertically, rather than cast and retrieve them. This permits pinpoint accuracy by hovering over suspected crappie schools observed on the sonar unit and yo-yoing the lure straight down. Snaps of the rod tip are used to activate the lure.

Both blades and spoons used for deep-water crappies typically weigh between 3/8-ounce to 3/4-ounce. This may seem unusually heavy for a crappie bait, but I can assure you that fall feeding crappies have little trouble inhaling lures that measure less than 2 1/2 inches long. You can use minnow rigs or a jig-and-minnow if you desire, but I have not found them as productive in November as the erratic in-place injured baitfish action of flashing spoons and blades. When one school of deepwater crappies quits hitting hard metal, I simply begin searching another structure.

In reservoirs where crappies shift to creek channels in the early fall, there is only minimal movement of fish from October to November. In shallow impoundments, if the channel edge is at least 15 feet deep with good brush or stump cover, crappie schools may continue to use the site right to ice-up.

In larger reservoirs, crappies simply move farther down the lake arm or bay along the channel edge. Channel bends in the depth range from 20 to 35 feet usually see the greatest concentrations of crappies. On some impoundments, deep flats adjacent to the river channel hold crappies, too, if cover is present.

Besides the depth of 20 to 35 feet, the single most important factor is wood cover. Groups of stumps with exposed root systems or manmade brush piles hold a lot of crappies. Exposed-treble-hook lures can easily be snagged when jigged in wood cover. Rather than risk losing a number of blades and spoons, I generally go with a jig-and-minnow for deep reservoir situations. After all, once the wood cover has been located on the sonar unit, the crappies have been pinpointed. There is not a lot of searching required.

A 1/8-ounce leadhead jig is dressed with a plastic/marabou combination grub body and tipped with a one-inch to two-inch fathead minnow. This type of combination grub is available from Lindy, Blue Fox and Mister Twister. After years of experimentation, I have settled on orange or orange/red as my favorite late-fall jig color. I always start with an orange jighead and orange marabou tail, and switch to black, white or chartreuse only if the orange does not catch fish.

The jig-and-minnow combination is generally fished vertically rather than retrieved horizontally. This reduces hang-ups in the brush and stumps. Most of the time I use the standard round jighead, with a light quivering of the rod tip the only action imparted to the jig.

Other times I use planing jigheads, such as the Northland Airplane Jig, System Tackle's Walleye Flyer, or Charlie Brewer's Original Slider Head. By slowly lifting and lowering the rod tip a couple of inches, these jigheads glide in a tantalizing circular pattern.

If you have missed a visit recently, be sure to drop in on fall crappies this year.

Notes on Harvest

Some anglers take hundreds, maybe thousands, of crappies each season when the fish are concentrated, filling their freezers with fillets. Not so many years ago fisheries managers encouraged this practice, believing the panfish populations could not be damaged. However, recent studies that show panfish can be overfished have altered this management philosophy. Restrictive panfish creel limits (Conservation Lake regulations) have been implemented on some Pennsylvania waters.

Unfortunately, word on overharvesting crappies is slow to spread among anglers. Even obeying the standard 50-panfish daily creel on most inland waters, more crappies may be taken than should be harvested to maintain or increase the quality of the crappie fishery.

On Pymatuning where there is no daily creel limit, I have observed individual anglers take more than 100 crappies every day until they had completely fished out a fall congregation of fish.

Limit your take to what your family will definitely consume. Don't fill out everyone's limit simply because it is possible to do so. Consider the future.–*DB*.

HARD-COAL TROUT

by Ed Howey

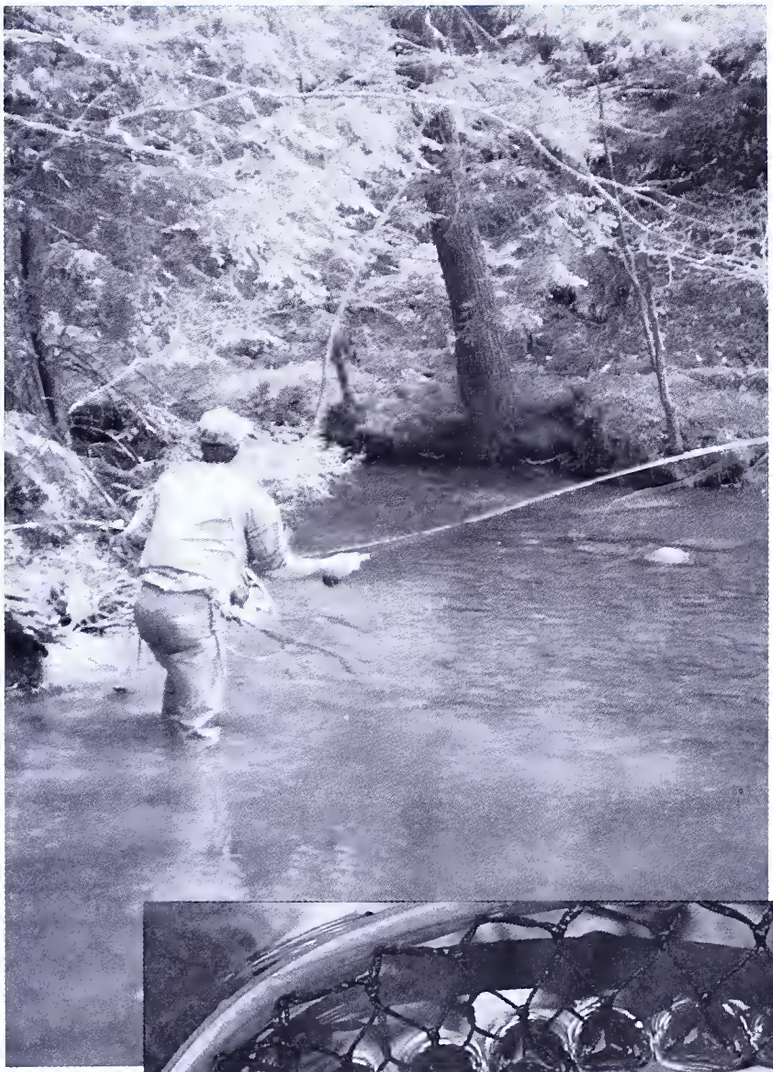


photo-Ed Howey

Hard-Coal Country has always had plenty of water. Unfortunately, much of it was bad water, befouled with acid mine leachate, or blackened by the silt-laden effluent of collieries. Or both. But all that is a-changin'. For instance: In the entire Commonwealth only five streams include segments that have been designated Trophy Trout waters for a total of 21.8 miles. Hard-Coal's Lackawanna County claims one of these, accounting for 5.2 of those miles. Clean water laws have slowly brought progress, but perhaps the biggest benefactor has been the reduction of mining operations in areas where mining once dominated the landscape. And time, the great healer, has been at work, so that huge piles of culm, now dressed in second growth flora, begin to look like natural hills.

The gain in regulated stretches is testimony to the changes taking place. In 1983 only a one-mile stretch of Bowman Creek stood on the list of waters deemed good enough to warrant special regulation. In the decade since, the list has grown to six streams, adding up to more than 16 miles. Most of the newcomers are in the delayed-harvest category, subject to artificial lure regulations (flies or spin lures). Because of the criteria they must meet, regulated waters, given adequate rainfall, may offer better than average chances for trout action in the months between June and the following spring. Moreover, catch-and-release regu-



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck



photo-Ed Howey



lations, such as those in effect on a section of Lackawanna County's Roaring Brook, help sustain the fishery.

Roaring Brook has two fishable stretches, one regulated, one not. The unregulated water, a good early season fishery, runs from the dam at Elmhurst downstream for about 10 miles into populated sections of Dunmore and Scranton. But for a distance of about four miles upstream from Elmhurst reservoir to a dam near Hollisters, catch-and-release regulations (artificials only) contribute to year-round trout fishing. The lower half of this stretch is accessible from PA 435 and intersecting secondary roads. The upper half, however, veers off into rugged country where only back roads provide access. Just above Elmhurst the stream averages 15 feet to 20 feet in width, and is in a considerable hurry as it drops down the mountain toward the reservoir.

The Roaring Brook stretch is the only water in the region subject to year-round catch-and-release rules. Most regulated waters are covered by delayed-harvest rules, which impose no-kill from March 1 until the middle of June, after which a daily creel limit of three fish more than 9 inches long is the rule.

Bowman Creek in Wyoming County offers some 19 miles of approved trout water, but only a short, one-mile section is under delayed-harvest (flies only) regulations. This stretch lies about a mile downstream from Evans Falls along PA 309/29 and is best reached by turning off PA 309/29 onto PA 292. Shortly after crossing the stream, PA 292 veers sharply to the right, but a secondary road breaks off at the turn and continues straight ahead. This road, which turns to dirt after a few hundred yards, follows the regulated stretch to its end, and while there is private land to be respected along here, there are plenty of places to park and work a fly on some very nice water.

In this section Bowman is a good-sized stream, reaching 40 feet in width in many places. Chilled by cold mountain springs at its headwaters, Bowman usually maintains trout-friendly temperatures all summer through most of its length. Anglers bent on adventure and a catch of stream-wise trout should ply the winding roads that criss-cross this rugged area to find sections of the stream deep in rugged surroundings far off the beaten path.

Three new delayed-harvest, artificials-only stretches now accompany Bowman on the regulated waters list: Bear Creek and the Little Schuylkill River in Schuylkill County; and Nescopeck Creek in Luzerne County.

The upstream reaches of Nescopeck Creek east of I-81 might easily qualify as the most scenic trout stream in the state. From a point near the I-81 overpass upstream to the eastern boundary of State Game Lands 187, more than 10 miles of approved trout stream beckon anglers to a remote landscape of woods and waters. The final 2.4 miles of this in undeveloped Nescopeck State Park comprise the delayed-harvest, lures-only stretch, which begins at a point just below where Creasey Creek enters the main stem. Lying in an isolated area to the north and east of the I-80/PA 309 interchange, there is no easy access to the regulated water. From just north of Angel Park a hardtop road off PA 309 roughly follows the course of the stream. In the end, however, the upper Nescopeck requires some walking over old trails and overgrown logging roads to reach streamside.

Access to the downstream sections below PA 309 is somewhat less forbidding with local roads off the main highway running along the stream at several places. Well-canopied and fed by mountain springs in the headwaters, Nescopeck stays cold enough to hold trout and attract anglers throughout the year. It's a remarkably clear freestone stream, and demands careful work from fly, lure and bait fishermen alike.

From a point just east of Summit Station to Auburn on the Schuylkill River, Schuylkill County's Bear Creek offers more than eight miles of fine small-stream fishing, all of which is accessible off PA 895. Running clear and cold when other streams in the area are high and muddy, almost two miles of Bear has been designated delayed harvest, lures only. This stretch starts about a half-mile above township road T-662 and extends downstream to T-676. Both these secondary roads intersect PA 895. There is much posted land along the stream, so it is up to anglers to avoid actions that will lead to the loss of more water through posting. Brush-lined and on the smallish side (10 to 15 feet), Bear Creek is more suited to spinning tackle than to fly tackle.

Departing Bear Creek toward the north and east, PA 895 crosses the Little Schuykill River near the village of New Ringgold. The Little Schuylkill is yet another example of dead water brought back to life. Once black with coal dust, water quality has improved to the extent that special regulations (delayed harvest, lures only) have been applied to a stretch beginning at the PA 895 bridge and extending downstream for 1.7 miles to where T-848 crosses the river. T-848 follows this big stream (40 feet to 50 feet wide) along an excellent stretch of water shaded by profuse growth of rhododendron, laurel and hemlock. Both ends

HARD-COAL TROUT

of the stretch offer ample parking space from where the angler is within easy walking distance of water that could hold trout year-round.

Outside of the regulated stretch the Little Schuylkill offers approved trout water both upstream and downstream. Upstream the best, most easily accessible section lies below South Tamaqua along PA 443. Downstream, the best sections lie above Drehersville. The Little Schuylkill holds great potential for excellent trout fishing in the future, and anglers should be careful to do nothing that would jeopardize this development.

The biggest river within the region, the Lackawanna, has long been fishable from above Carbondale well up into Susquehanna County. Recently, however, the stretch that has attracted greatest attention is the once coal-fouled stream that is now designated Trophy Trout water. In 1993 a Trophy Trout stretch was established running downstream for 2.8 miles from the White Oak Road Bridge in Archbald. For 1994 this stretch has been extended another 2.4 miles down to the Lackawanna Avenue bridge in Olyphant, for a total of over five Trophy Trout miles in the heart of Hard-Coal country. Trophy Trout rules require the use of artificials only, and allow a daily creel limit of two trout at least 14 inches long, rules that should help sustain a population of bigger than average fish.

The Lackawanna valley was developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as mining interests exploited the anthracite coal seams. As a result, the Trophy section of the river flows through a series of towns that grew up during the boom years, and much of the stream bank lies on residential or industrial property. Nevertheless, community groups and private citizens have worked hard to ensure access to this special water.

Typical of the effort to make the fishery accessible is the stretch at Blakely Township Park, where a path along the river provides access for anglers as well as a place for runners to run. Throughout the length of stream, Fish and Boat Commission signs on power poles and trees identify the Trophy water. The best bet for anglers is to prowl the streets that follow the course of the river in search of a place to get on. They are plentiful.

Many other streams in Hard-Coal country offer good early season fishing, and some are favored with qualities needed to sustain trout populations throughout the year. Look for streams fed by high mountain springs and sheltered by woodland canopy. And the place that's a little harder to get to than most is always a good bet.

Finally, a major waterway recovering from abuse is the Lehigh River where it forms the border of Lackawanna/Monroe, and Luzerne/Monroe and Carbon counties. This is big water that holds up under a lot more angling pressure than the smaller streams. From a point south of I-80 near Lehigh Tannery upstream to the vicinity of Gouldsboro, more than 25 miles of approved trout water receive plentiful plantings of trout, and Lehigh anglers are optimistic for continued improvement of this big-water fishery.

Many highways and roadways follow or cross the river to provide access all along this length, but maps can make the job much easier. I like the Type 3 County General Highway Maps, obtainable from the Department of Transportation General Sales Store, P.O. Box 2028, Harrisburg, PA 17105. Call for price information: (717) 787-6746.

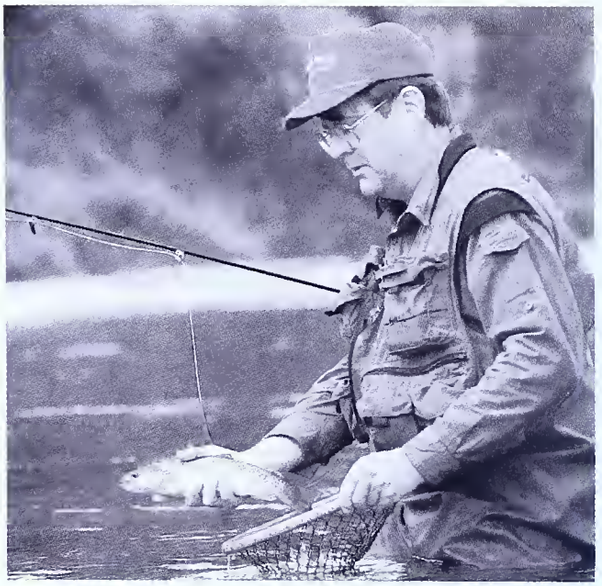


photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

COAL-COUNTRY Trout Streams

Stream	*Miles*	*Township(s)*	*Access Info*
LACKAWANNA COUNTY			
S. Br. Tunkhannock Cr.*	10	Benton, N. Abington, Scot	I-81;PA438
Gardner Cr.	5	Ransom	SR3001
Spring Brook	1	Moosic	I-81;PA502
LUZERNE COUNTY			
Harvey Cr. (lower)	6	Jackson, Plymouth	PA29
Harvey Cr. (upper)*	6	Lehman, Lake	PA118,415,secondaries
Wapwallopen Cr. (upr)	3	Wright, Rice	SR2045
Wapwallopen Cr. (lwr)	2	Hollenback	SR3012
Wright Cr.	3	Dennison	SR2041
WYOMING COUNTY			
Horton Cr.	3	Nicholson	PA92, SR1017
Mehoopany Cr.*	10	Forkston, Mehoopany	PA87, SR3001
N. Br. Mehoopany Cr.*	5	North Branch, Forkston	PA87
Meshoppen Cr.	10	Meshoppen,Washington	PA29,SR4008
W. Br. Meshoppen Cr.	6	Meshoppen	US6,SR4027
S. Br. Tunkhannock Cr.	5	Tunkhannock, Clinton	US6
SCHUYLKILL COUNTY			
Little Catawissa Cr.*	4	Union	SR4033
Pine Cr. (Mahantango)	3	Hegins	PA125
Pine Cr. (L. Schuylkill)	3	Ryan, Rush	PA54
Locust Cr.	5	Ryan, Rush	SR1011
Beaver Cr.	2	Walker	T529,SR1013
Cold Run	2	Walker	PA443,SR1013
Red Cr.	3	S. Manheim	PA61,Driebert Valley
Mahantango Cr.	4	Upper Mahantango	PA125, secondaries
Deep Cr.	7	Hegins	PA125, Deep Cr. Rd.
Lower L. Swatara Cr.*	8	Pine Grove, Washington	PA895
Upper L. Swatara Cr.	5	Pine Grove, Washington	PA443
L. Mahanoy Cr.	2	Butler	PA61, secondaries

**late-season possibilities*

When Salmon Come Home

by Mike Bleech



photo-Mike Bleech

I got skunked the first year salmon came home to the Pennsylvania tributaries of Lake Erie. The following two falls all I could do was brood over it while I did my time in the Army. Oh, did I brood–through a frigid Alpine winter and through two jungle monsoon seasons, further tormenting myself by reading everything I could get my hands on about salmon fishing. And the magazines were filled with salmon fishing stories as the Great Lakes salmon boom was getting under way.

Just as salmon were staging their 1971 fall run, I got back into Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania looked mighty good. I have never taken it for granted since. I celebrated my return by going salmon fishing.

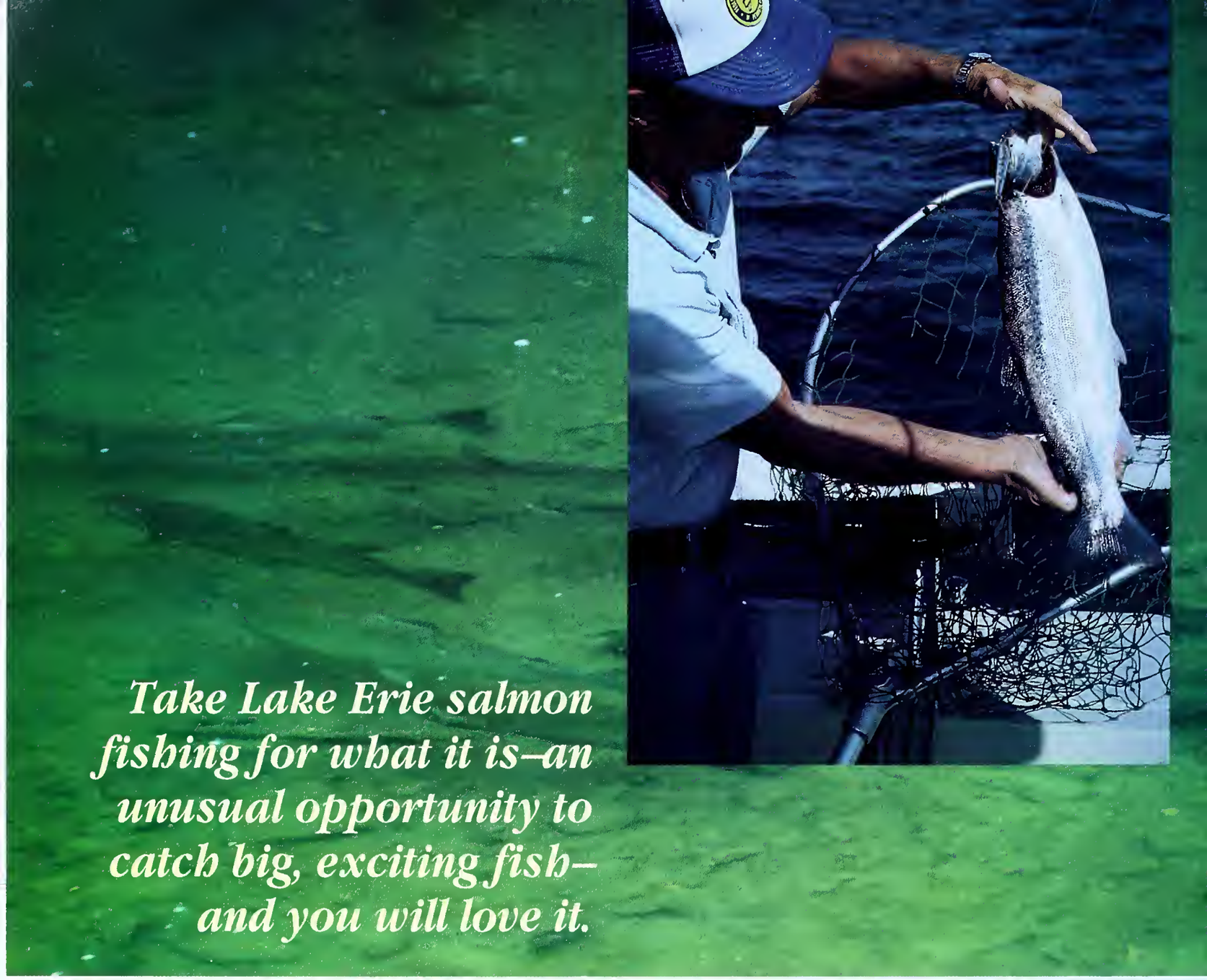
You'd thing salmon would treat a veteran better!

With each defeat at the hands...er, fins of salmon, I became more obsessed with catching them. Through that fall I fished for salmon whenever I had the time. But I would have to wait another year before breaking my salmon jinx.

About every fifth wave lifted me off my feet. You had to be this deep or you would get crowded out of the line of salmon anglers casting into the surf near the mouth of Twentymile Creek. As most of the other anglers were doing, I had a purple Roostertail at the working end of my line. Salmon were porpoising in front of us, challenging us.

One fellow between me and the mouth of the creek was catching and releasing more salmon than all of the other 40 or 50 anglers in the area. After watching him for a while I realized that each of his salmon hook-ups occurred immediately after he made a backward sweep with his rod.

When I pointed this out to the fisherman who was standing next to me, he cursed "the snagger"!



Take Lake Erie salmon fishing for what it is–an unusual opportunity to catch big, exciting fish–and you will love it.

Five key lessons in coho fishing

Lesson 1. But I watched the successful angler remove his lures from inside the mouths of the cohos. He was not snagging those salmon. This was my first great lesson in salmon fishing–cohos respond to acceleration of lures, and to fast-moving lures in general.

Some moments are so dramatic, so powerful, so obvious, they seem spiritual. The first time I made a sweep with my rod a coho slammed the spinner, launched itself out of the water in a series of high, long leaps, and then tore most of the 8-pound line from the deep spool of my worn Mitchell 300.

Accustomed to 9-inch trout, 13-inch smallmouths, 16-inch walleyes and 23-inch pike, I was caught by surprise. Never had I felt such a powerful, fast, spectacular fish.

By great fortune I managed to get the coho onto shore. My fishing companion asked if I wanted help netting the salmon, but since I had a long-handled net strapped over my back, I told him I did not need any help. The strap holding the net snagged on something, though, and I could not use it. By the time my friend realized what was happening I was behind his back with the salmon on a short line. He hurried his retrieve to help me, but before he could help, a wave washed my prize onto the beach, where I pounced on it and scooped it away from the water.

Two more salmon fell to my newly learned tactic, and a half-dozen others threw the lure before we quit for lunch. I had broken the ice. From that point the lessons came more easily. During my next two decades of salmon fishing I was not skunked as often as I had been during my first two years of the sport.

Lesson 2. Long rods make better salmon anglers. Casting distance is an obvious advantage to shore anglers. Go to any of the creek mouths when the cohos are there and observe that the anglers who cast farthest catch more than their share of salmon. Sometimes virtually no salmon are within reach of most shore anglers.

Only when I built a long rod designed specifically to make long casts with 5/8-ounce spoons did I realize how much better long rods are for fighting salmon, or any big trout. Long rods bend to cushion the shock of hard turns and twists. They also reduce the chance of getting slack line when a salmon turns quickly toward you.

My first serious salmon rod, which I still have, is 7 3/4 feet long. No, make that 7 1/2 feet. I broke 3 inches off the tip



photos/Mike Rhoads

Recent Lake Erie Coho Salmon Stocking in Pennsylvania

1988	1,102,050	1991	984,000
1989	1,166,480	1992	98,950
1990	272,000	1993	271,700

About the best that can be said for the coho prospects this fall is that it looks better than last fall.

A third salmon, the pink salmon, is a noteworthy part of the Pennsylvania salmon picture, partly because it is superior in eating quality. These salmon were accidentally introduced into Lake Superior in 1955 by Canadian biologists. Pinks have since spread naturally to all the Great Lakes. During 1985 they comprised a significant part of the Lake Erie salmon catch, both during the summertime deep-water fishing season and the fall run. They are not stocked, so their fortunes rest on their ability to reproduce naturally.

Also called humpbacks, or simply humpies, they are characterized by developing a humped back as spawning time approaches. Like cohos and chinooks, they return to the tributaries to spawn and die, but unlike the other salmon they have major and minor spawning runs in alternating years.

Pinks are smaller than other salmon, but bigger in Lake Erie than in the other Great Lakes. In Lake Superior, where they are abundant, they seldom reach a weight of 3 pounds. At Erie they sometimes grow to 6 pounds. The Fish and Boat Commission recently added pink salmon to the Angler Recognition Program.

one winter at the Kinzua tailwaters while fishing for brown trout. It is a fine rod, though I prefer salmon rods 8 feet to 9 feet long.

Other parts of the fishing rig are less specialized. Most anglers opt for open-face spinning reels for casting distance. The reel spool should be able to hold at least 150 yards of 12-pound line. Salmon are not line-shy.

Pennsylvania salmon anglers can get away with a light salmon outfit because we fish mainly for cohos. Such a rod also serves very well for steelhead and other big-water trout fishing, though with lighter line spooled on the reel. If you want a rod that does this, look for one that is rated for line in the 6- to 12-pound bracket.

Lesson 3. About 20 years ago I proposed "Mike's Purple Spinner Theory." It goes like this...

Each year, whichever lure is used to make the first good catch of the fall run will be the hot lure all of that fall. Word spreads quickly about the hot lure. Soon most salmon anglers are using it, and it follows that most salmon are caught with it, which further substantiates its reputation.

You will catch many more salmon if you have less faith in any one particular lure. The normal situation is that salmon do prefer a certain lure, or lure color, or lure size. But that preference can change many times in just a day, let alone an entire season.

A productive lure selection should include a variety of spoons, crankbaits and spinners from an inch to 6 inches long. Proven colors and patterns are silver/blue, silver/green, silver/red, silver/orange, gold/orange, black, purple, chartreuse and yellow. These will be fine for either casting or trolling. Spoons are often favored by surf casters because they can be cast long distances. If you use spinners be sure also to use top quality swivels, and consider a keel when trolling spinners.

Lesson 4. The rod tip snapped back, but before I could begin to reach for it, the rod straightened. Then it snapped into a deep bow again, just to straighten again. This happened four times before the hook finally sunk into the jaw of the salmon that was attacking it.

I had never seen that happen before. Many times salmon strike lures without getting hooked, but until I started using scent I had rarely seen them smack the lure a second time. Using scent it is a common occurrence. And this is the main reason, I believe, that scent is so important. I doubt if scent attracts salmon to trolled or cast lures. Maybe it does. But once they get close to the lure, or actually strike it, then the scent keeps their interest.

When Salmon Come Home

Lesson 5. Something about the churning water behind a spinning propeller attracts salmon. I have seen entire schools of cohos in the prop wash of my 16-foot boat. Keep at least one lure in the prop wash whenever trolling for salmon near the surface, or in water shallower than 20 feet.

Use a deep-diving lure in the prop wash, for example, a Hot'n Tot or Bomber Model A. Shallow-running lures tend to come to the surface. Deep divers will not go too deep on a short line.

Perhaps because of the way swirling water affects colors, two colors have been best in the prop wash of my boats–bright yellow and black.

When and where

The peak of the fall salmon run occurs from the last week of September through late October. Before then, cohos are somewhere between deep and shallow water, and they are usually very difficult to catch. After this time, they are getting dark.

Salmon deteriorate rapidly when they reach the tributaries. By the time they are ready to spawn, they are ugly, blotchy colored and covered with fungus. They are not fit to eat.

If you are concerned with the eating quality of your salmon, catch them before they get into the tributaries, while they are still silver. Casting in the surf is an unusual treat in Pennsylvania, and it can be rewarding. Or troll near the tributary mouths. This can be done in relatively small boats, but boaters must be aware of the nature of Lake Erie. Waves can build quickly!

Salmon fishing in the creeks is popular, but the salmon are barely fit to eat by this late phase of their lives. And to be blunt, a large portion of the salmon that are hooked in the creeks are snagged. Salmon generally show no interest in bait or lures once they get into the creeks.

Larger creeks–Elk, Walnut, and Twentymile–get the biggest part of the fall salmon run. Most creeks hold at least some salmon. Access is limited, though. Access is best at Elk and Walnut creeks, where the Fish and Boat Commission operates facilities.

Angler Recognition Program Salmon Qualifying Weights

	senior	*junior*
chinook salmon	14 pounds	11-1/2 pounds
coho salmon	8 pounds	6-1/2 pounds
pink salmon	3 pounds	2-1/2 pounds

Maligned due to its inconsistency almost from the start, the future of our salmon program looks at least as uncertain. The only alternative, though, is no salmon. Take Lake Erie salmon fishing for what it is–an unusual opportunity to catch big, exciting fish–and you will love it.

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
Celebrating 25 years
LAKE ERIE TROUT & SALMON PROGRAM
1968-69 to 1993-94

A Quarter-Century of Erie Salmon

Salmon were first stocked into Lake Erie by the Fish and Boat Commission in 1967, following the early success of the Lake Michigan salmon programs. Only cohos were stocked for a few years.

Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and Michigan all planted salmon into Lake Erie between the mid-1960s and today, and all of these fish contributed to the summertime deep-water fishing off the Pennsylvania coast. Ohio stocked chinooks until 1980 and cohos until 1988. Michigan toyed with cohos during the 1980s. New York began an aggressive salmon program in 1968 with cohos, adding chinooks in 1973. Since 1983, New York has stocked about a half-million chinooks per year, but in 1992 coho stocking was discontinued.

Only Pennsylvania, New York, and Ontario have deep water that is suitable for summertime salmon habitat. But because most salmon return to the tributaries where they were stocked, if they were there at the critical imprinting time, only those salmon stocked in Pennsylvania have contributed to our fall near-shore and stream fishing.

Discontinuing coho and brown trout stocking in New York during the past couple of years is a response to the declining smelt population in Lake Erie. Biologists give cleaner water, predation, and Canadian commercial fishing as likely causes for the smelt decline. For whatever reason, it is bad news for salmon anglers. Smelt are the primary forage for Lake Erie salmon.

A major reason behind the Great Lakes salmon programs was to help control alewives, an exotic like smelt. Alewives periodically die off in large numbers, creating a disgusting mess along shorelines. Even though Lake Erie holds alewives, they are not as abundant as they are in lakes Michigan and Ontario.

Pennsylvania stocked close to a million chinooks in 1977, and 3/4-million as late as 1985. In 1992 it was discontinued.

Cohos have been the mainstay of the Pennsylvania salmon program. During the 1980s we stocked about a million per year. But our supply of good coho eggs has been a problem, as it is now all around the Great Lakes. The recent coho stocking record shows how inconsistent the program has been.

graphic-Ted Walke

Pennsylvania's Biggest Walleyes

Where, When and How Anglers Catch Them

by Dan Tredinnick

Among perches in America, the walleye reaches the largest size. Among Pennsylvania anglers, the walleye is growing rapidly, too–in popularity. In 1993, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission issued exactly 200 Junior and Senior Angler Awards for eitation walleyes, ranking the "Tasty Torpedo" seeond in numbers only to steelhead on the trophy list.

Just how big are these award winners? Last year's largest walleye–hoisted from the Delaware River–weighed in at 14 pounds, 7 ounees, was just shy of 35 ineches long and boasted a girth of 19.75 ineches. Even the smallest fish among the top 20 weighed in at a whopping 10 pounds, 4 ounees.

To simply qualify for a Senior Angler Award, an angler 16 years or older must record a walleye of eight pounds or more. An angler 15 or younger ean take home a Junior Angler Award for a walleye six pounds or more.

For every one of these trophies, there was a slightly different secret to sueeess. But there are patterns that ean be found by analyzing 1993's biggest walleyes, and that information might just give you the key to adding your name to the trophy list in 1994.



photo-Doug Stamm

When

Among the top 20 walleyes, five were eaught during the month of June. Three eaeh were landed July and Oetober. January, August and September each produced two of the top 20. One topnotch walleye was caught during March, April and May.

Where

Big walleyes were caught in 21 different waters in 21 different eounties. Though Lake Erie remains Pennsylvania's walleye eapital with 158 big fish, award winners were caught all over the state.

Award-sized fish were logged in the following waters: Delaware River, Greenlick Run Dam, Allegheny Reservoir, Dunlap Lake, Allegheny River, Canoe Creek Lake, Pymatuning Lake, Lake Carey, Juniata River, Lake Arthur, Loyalsock Creek, Lake Wallenpaupack, Noekamixon Lake, Susquehanna River, Blue Marsh Lake, French Creek, Glendale Lake, Beltzville Lake, Miller Pond and the Ohio River.

There was no one "best area" among the top 10 walleyes of 1993–all came from different waters!

How

There wasn't one "best lure" among the top-ranked fish, either. Artifieial lures held a slim lead over natural baits in the top 20. Twelve of those walleyes were taken on artifieials, but various natural baits ranging from nightcrawlers to maggots and a small sueker took their share of trophies, too, with eight of the 20 biggest.

Rebels, though, took three of the top 20 walleyes last year, ineluding the biggest fish. Rapalas also notehed three of the top 20.

The edge lures held over natural bait widens the deeper into the list one goes: 153 award-winning fish were taken on artifieials. The Northern King Spoon was the overall favorite lure, accounting for 35 walleyes. The Bomber finished seeond among trophy anglers with 25 top fish. A Bagley and a Storm took nine award winners each.

State record

The state record for walleyes has held at 17 pounds, 9 ounees since 1980 when Mike Holly of Bradford pulled the fish of a lifetime from the depths of the Allegheny Reservoir in Warren County.

Dan Tredinnick, Commission Media Relations Chief, runs the Commission Angler Recognition Program.

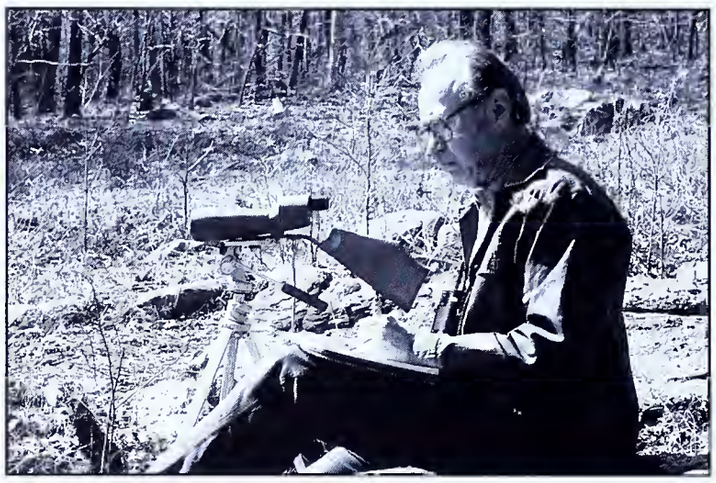
Your Award-Sized Fish

If you land a walleye or any one of 30 other officially recognized speeies that you think might be a trophy, have your fish weighed immediately on certified scales. Get the species positively identified by an authorized Fish and Boat Commission employee or fishing license issuing agent.

Many tackle shops can provide you with a copy of the Angler Award Applieation or you can request one directly from the Commission. Send a business-sized self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Angler Recognition Program, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

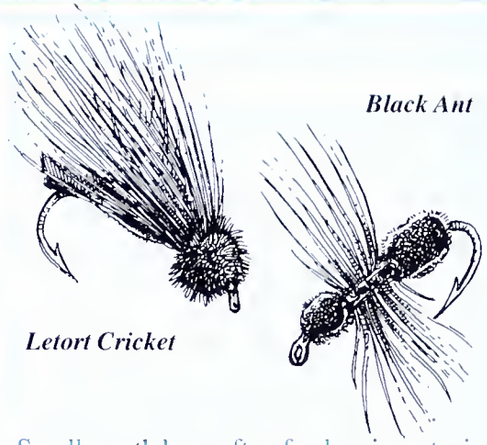
Should you make the minimum standard, and meet all the other qualifications, you'll reeeive a certificate of reeognition from the Commission. For your first trophy catch per species eaeh year, you'll also be awarded a colorful jaeket patch! But remember, you have only 60 days from the time of catch to submit your application, so don't delay.

The newly founded Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art will honor the late Ned Smith, famed wildlife artist and illustrator. Smith, a native of Millersburg, was a self-taught artist whose career spanned more than 45 years. His first major illustration sale, a 1939 *Pennsylvania Angler* cover painting, launched his professional career. During his career Smith illustrated 14 books, thousands of magazines, painted the first of state duck stamp, and wrote for many outdoor magazines–including "School's Out," a column published in the *Angler* from 1963 to 1969.



Ned Smith

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Smallmouth bass often feed on insects, just as trout feed. Try a sink-tip fly line and small bass bugs, poppers and terrestrials like ant and beetle imitations. These are especially effective in the early morning and at dusk.

Most nymphs and wet flies improve as they are used. The rougher they look, the more "chewed up," the better they are because they take on the "buggy" characteristics of the naturals. This is not the case with dry flies. When the wings of a dry fly become matted down and no longer stand up, it's time to tie on a new one.

When fishing for catfish in a pond or lake, fish the bank where the wind is blowing the waves onto shore. The movement of the waves moves food into the shallows, concentrating the catfish in these places.

Look for trout in the shady parts of a stream during the hot months. The shade provides cover, plus helps to cool the water. The mouths of feeder creeks and springs also provide cooler water. Morning is usually the best time to fish, because the water temperature has had all night to drop.

The summer months mean it's time for wet-wading, in many streams, so put your waders away. Wear a fast-drying pair of shorts made out of a material like nylon, and a lightweight, long-sleeved shirt. You can roll the sleeves up during the heat of the day, and roll them down again if it gets cool, or the mosquitos get active. A stout pair of wading boots with a gravel cuff completes your warm-weather outfit.

Avoid handling small fish that you plan to release. Just run your hand down the leader to the lure or fly, and gently twist the hook out. By not touching the fish, you protect the natural "slime" coating that aids the fish in fighting disease. If you hook the fish deeply, clip the tippet as close to the fish as possible. The hook will eventually work itself free, or rust out of the fish's mouth.

When you are wading in a heavy current, face the bank and keep your hip to the current. This presents less of a surface for the current to work against. Pick your feet up one at a time, making sure that your foot is firmly planted on the bottom before taking the next step. Slow and easy is the key to wading fast water. In addition, always use a wading staff in a swift, deep current.

Walleyes are notorious night-feeders, often moving into the shallows in the evening. Use minnows or a minnow-like plug, and let the lure sink before reeling in very slowly.

Pools and the deeper water below riffles and runs of a stream are good places to look for big smallmouth bass, especially in the summer. You need to get your fly or lure to the bottom quickly, so use a heavier jig, a weighted streamer, or a sink-tip line.

illustration- Ted Walke

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Anglers Currents

Commissioner Steps Down

Fish and Boat Commissioner T.T. (Ted) Metzger, Jr., has resigned as a commissioner, effective June 24.

Metzger is a resident of Johnstown. He was first appointed to the Commission in 1983 by then-governor Richard Thornburgh. He was reappointed in 1991 by Governor Robert P. Casey.

Metzger represented the Fourth Commissioner District, which includes Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin and Somerset counties.

With Metzger's resignation, two of the Commission's 10 seats are now empty. The Sixth District seat is also currently vacanct because of the untimely death of Commission President James S. Biery, Jr., in May.

River Checkpoint Deemed Success

There were plenty of fireworks, but a massive effort by the Fish and Boat Commission kept the July Fourth holiday from being a "bang-up" weekend of another sort.

During the course of the holiday weekend, Waterway Conservation Officers (WCOs) operated a sobriety and safety checkpoint on the Susquehanna River near Goldsboro, York County. The operation involved 15 officers, three marked patrol boats and unmarked personal watercraft.

Officers focused primarily on ensuring compliance with the state's Boating Under the Influence law; however, other safety and operational regulations were enforced as well. In all, 40 safety citations and numerous warnings were issued for minor infractions. Five boat operators were tested for sobriety with only one charged with Boating Under the Influence.

According to Guy Bowersox, Assistant Manager of the Southcentral Law Enforcement Region, rather than being disappointed that there weren't more arrests, the officers involved were pleased to find most operators in compliance with various boating regulations.

"Our mere presence obviously played a role in curtailing some of the behavior you might expect to find out on the river on a weekend like this one, but there's nothing wrong with that. Prevention is as much a part of our job as is enforcement.

"What was nice for us was that we got many, many positive comments on our efforts. A couple of officers even reported to me that they got standing ovations as they went by on patrol. So even though going through the checks may have been a bit inconvenient for some boaters, overall our efforts were appreciated," Bowersox said.–*Dan Tredinnick.*

Commission Graduates 10



12th Student Officer Class

The Fish and Boat Commission's Twelfth Student Officer Class was graduated during ceremonies held June 24 at the State Capital Building in Harrisburg.

The 10 members of the class were awarded their commissions as Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) at the graduation. The oath of office was administered by Honorable Joseph H. Kleinfelter, judge of the Commonwealth Court, and an address was delivered by Thomas J. Fee, (D-Lawrence County), Chairman of the House Game and Fisheries Committee.

To graduate as WCOs, the cadets completed nine months of intensive training at the Commission's H.R. Stackhouse School of Fishery Conservation and Watercraft Safety. The training included instruction in such subjects as the Fish and Boat Code, Clean Streams Law, the Crime Code and rules of criminal procedure. They also received instruction in marine laws, navigation of vessels, emergency rescue, fish identification, fishing skills and public relations.

Additionally, cadet class members also served time as field trainees, working with active WCOs on several waterways.



The process also included more than 500 hours provided by the Pennsylvania Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission.

The new officers have been assigned field duty in one of the Commission's six law enforcement regions.

Graduates and their hometowns are (1st row, l to r): Gerald B. Barton, Harrisburg; Raymond J. Borkowski, Erie; Craig A. Garman, Hollidaysburg; Representative Tom Fee (keynote speaker); Christopher D. McDevitt, Mars; William E. Martin, Evans City; Training Officer James R. Smith; (2nd row, l to r) James C. Stout, Bath; Mark T. Pisko, Nesquehoning; Robert A. McClellan, Lancaster; Robert F. Mader, Pleasant Gap; and Ann M. Caretto, Pittsburgh.

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

The Stranger

If fish are eating thousands of something the water's full of, it's foolish to show them something just like it," the man told me. "Throw them a stranger."

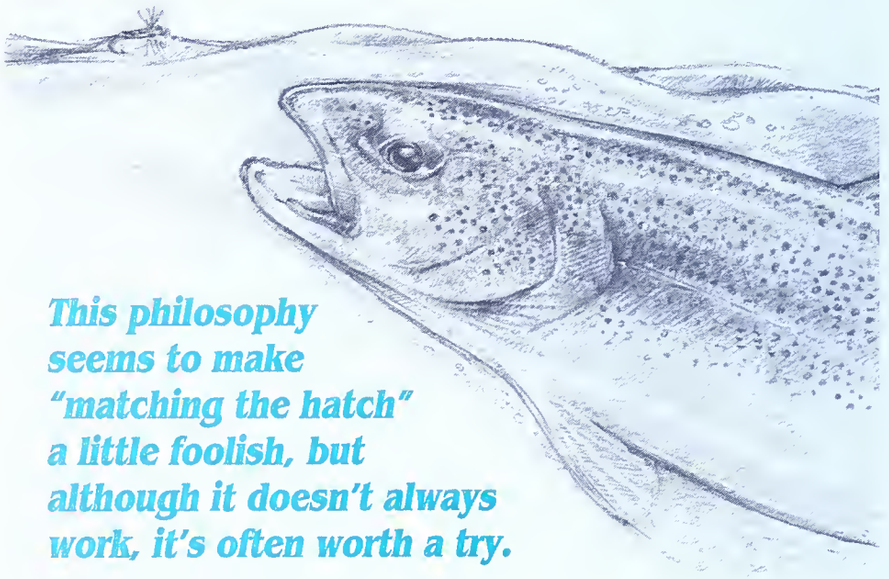
This philosophy seems to make "matching the hatch" a little foolish, but although it doesn't always work, it's often worth a try. We used to fish a shoreline where bass would now and then get a little excited over tiny minnows less than an inch long and storm all around the place, tearing up the surface. We sure couldn't produce a fly, bug or plug to match the tiny bait, but we caught some of them with big things that made a noise on top. Our analysis was that the loud fuss sounded like another fish dining and attracted attention. Then when a bass arrived on the scene, he was already on the prowl and when he saw the big thing banging around he'd grab it. It is always nice to think you have something like that figured out. There are killjoy scientific folks who explain that you can't really imitate any natural food with an artificial, but that you can come close in size and action when the fish is in the mood. This is very discouraging for those who have large stocks of feathers and hair, ornate tying vises and long winters.

There are some successful anglers, especially trout followers, who stick with the same lures everywhere they go, and a Royal Coachman doesn't represent anything in particular. Most would be better off with a little flexibility. But the theory of the "stranger" really goes a little further than that, even further than the ragged dry fly that's supposed to represent something injured that can't flit away from a hungry fish.

I had a creek with persnickety trout that fed on flies often matched by size 18s, which I tied laboriously to 6X or 7X tippets. Most of the fish weren't very big, having learned to be difficult while very young. Most of them were under a foot long, but there were big ones, too. I tended toward jassids and very small caddis imitations.

Fish at that creek seemed to be a little social, and even though some sort of hatch might be drifting for long distances, they seemed to gather in certain areas. Thus, a bad cast that laid a leader over one prospect might scatter the whole batch. I would like to call them a school, but that's the wrong term for trout. Maybe "pod" is a better word. Anyway, the rises would be close together in an area that could be covered from one spot if you wanted to adjust your casts from, say, 30 to 50 feet. It was no place for heavy tackle, and the rod I used most of the time was either a 2-weight or a 4-weight, and no matter what I used I felt like a bumbling oaf with a pole.

On that day the sun was bright, the water made the faintest tinkle, and the bottom growth waved rhythmically in the depths. The fish rose with dimples and only an occasional gentle plop. It was a curve marked by an old log lodged against the bank, and it was about three feet deep. I caught one small rainbow and then stood waiting for the commotion to subside. Ten minutes later the fish were feeding again, the flies they were taking something of a mixture of odds and ends, not unusual on that creek, most of them a miniature mayfly I couldn't name but much like a Light Cahill. I lengthened the leader a little and there was one bulging refusal. I knew there were probably three kinds of fish in that bunch–browns, rainbows and brook trout. I was especially offended by the fact I could not catch a brookie



This philosophy seems to make "matching the hatch" a little foolish, but although it doesn't always work, it's often worth a try.

because they'd always been braver (less thoughtful?) than the others. I wished for a cloud over the sun or a riffling breeze from somewhere, but I got neither.

Even in that situation, I reasoned, a stranger might work and I dug up a bushy size 12 something. When I made my first cast it seemed to hover like an osprey, but it alighted softly enough. It came downstream like some experimental sailboat. All rises in that sector stopped. Then something happened over by the old log. A swell pushed out into the main current and intercepted the stranger with a glug.

I shall spare you my dramatic performance with the little rod and how I chased the fish, a rainbow that measured 19 inches, which, since I had no net, was landed in a floundering tussle in some watercress. But strangers don't always work.

Illustration-Ted Walker

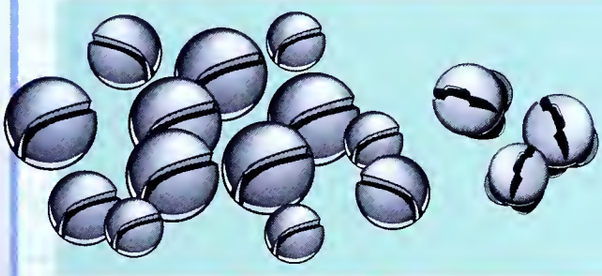
SMART Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

The Bottom Line on Sinkers

The key to catching lots of fish is putting the bait or lure in the fish's face. Sinkers are just another tool used by anglers to do that. The extra weight of the sinker takes the bait to the fish's depth and keeps it there. When fishing in current, the right size sinker also causes the bait to drift naturally with the current.

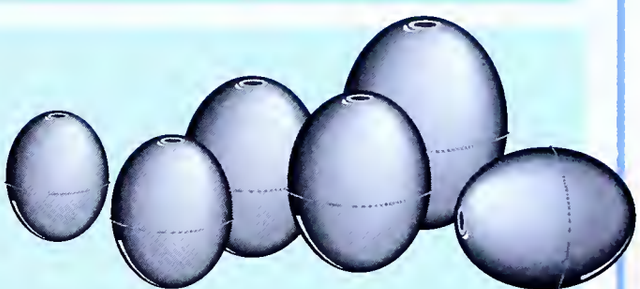
What is the "right size" sinker? The one that has enough weight to get the bait to where the fish are.



Splitshot—clamped on the line. Adjust the depth of the bait or lure by changing the size of the shot or changing the distance from the shot to the lure (shorter distance, bait closer to bottom, longer distance, bait farther from bottom).

Slip-sinkers are those that let the line move freely. They are used with a stop to keep the bait at a certain depth. They let fish take the bait without feeling the sinker.

Egg sinker—slip-sinker shaped like an egg.





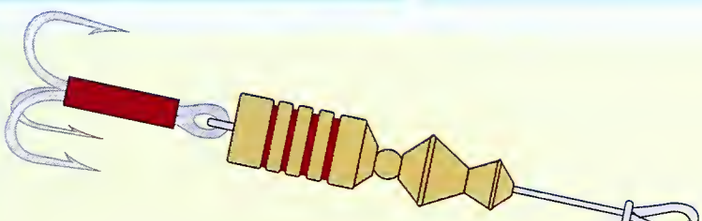
Bullet sinker or worm weight—a bullet-shaped slip-sinker. Pointed so that it slides through weeds.



Bank sinker—has an eye that the line is tied to or passes through. Rigged as a slip-sinker or tied to the line.

Casting sinker—has a swivel eye that line is tied to or passes through. This swivel eye is useful when line is going to be twisted—by current or lure. Rigged just like a bank sinker.





Sinkers aren't just useful when fishing natural bait. They are also useful when fishing artificial lures. They add extra weight without changing the action or the size of the lure.



illustration-Ted Walke

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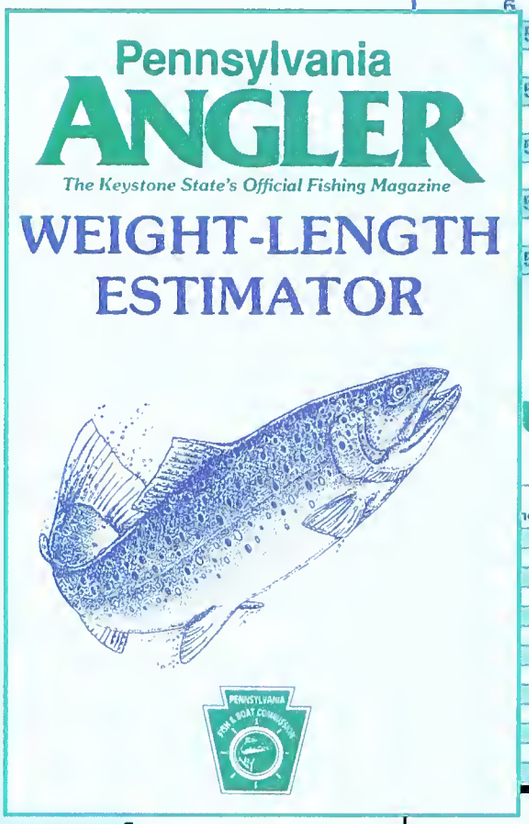
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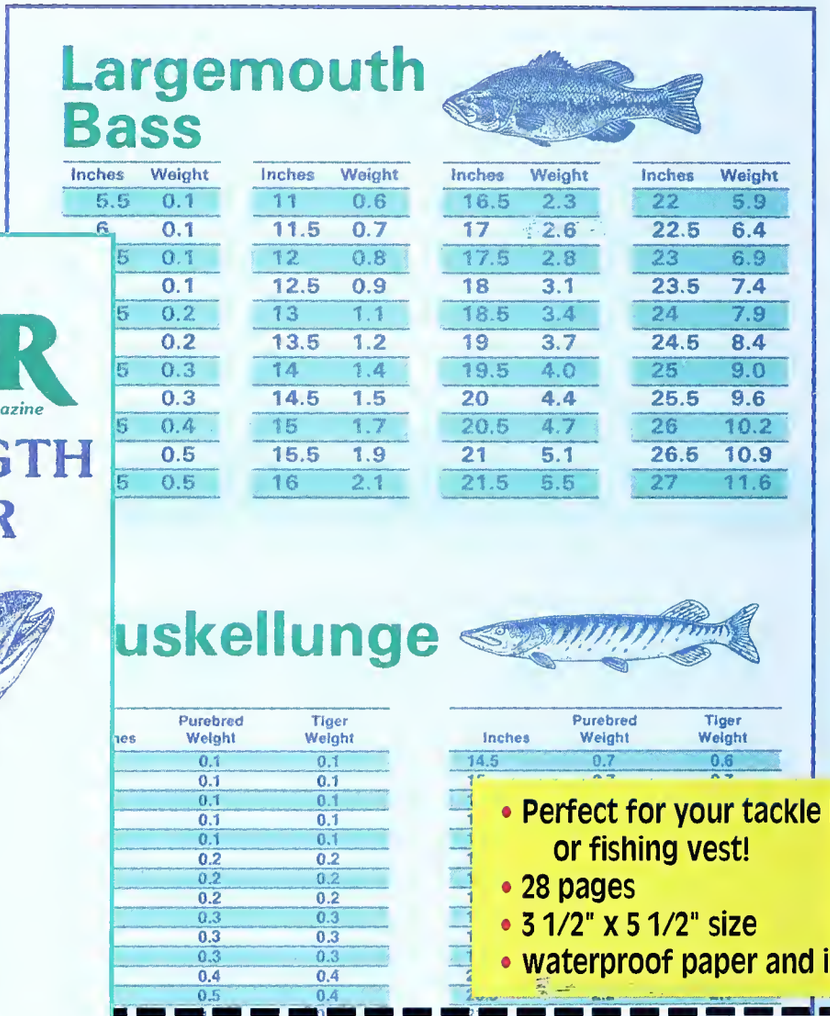
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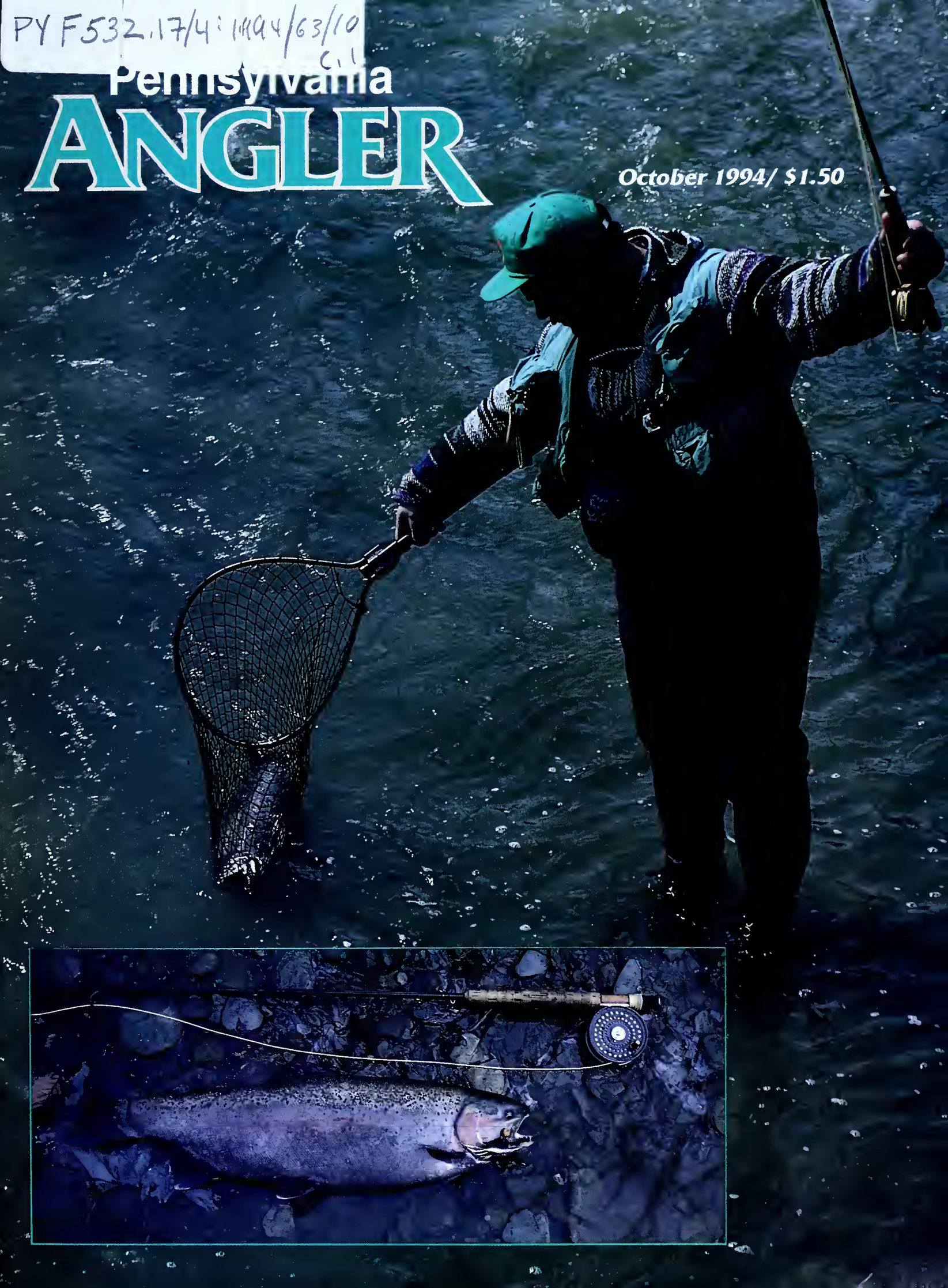
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Straight Talk

Waterways Conservation Officer: A New Breed

"Did you hear we have a new Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) in our area? I hope we get to meet the officer soon. There is so much that needs to be done. What do we expect of this protector of the resource?"

The responsibilities of a WCO are all-inclusive and address enforcement of the Fish and Boat Code and fishing and boating regulations. The WCO helps to preserve, protect and enhance the quality and diversity of aquatic resources and safeguard the lives and property of Commonwealth citizens and visitors. To fulfill these responsibilities a WCO must be knowledgeable and skilled in many fields--from emergency first aid and firearms proficiency to understanding the latest court decisions affecting enforcement operations.

Who is this individual? Where does this person come from and what training is required of a WCO to operate independently throughout the Commonwealth? These are only some of the questions asked. They are one of us and come from many different walks of life. Some come from large cities, others from rural communities. Some come from large families, others small ones.



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Let's examine in more detail the people we entrust with the protection of a cherished resource and the skills they need to do their jobs effectively.

With each announcement of Civil Service testing for a new WCO school, about 1,200 applications are received to fill 10 to 15 vacancies. Some 1,000 applicants take the written exam and 120 to 150 of that group are called in for an oral exam. Written and oral exam scores are then combined and the Commission is provided a prioritized list of eligible candidates. Further interviews are held and extensive background checks are made to ensure that only the best of the best are considered to become a WCO. Selected candidates are then sent to Penn State where they must successfully complete swimming, agility and physical fitness tests. Finally, the applicant list is narrowed down to the number desired to participate in some 38 weeks of demanding training. During this period, individual knowledge, skills and techniques are honed for the new WCOs to carry out their assigned responsibilities effectively.

In preparing to do their jobs, all candidates must satisfactorily complete 14.5 weeks of Act 120 (municipal police) training. The basic skills, knowledge, roles and tasks required of the profession with an understanding of human interaction in performing normal police actions are emphasized. Some of the subjects presented include: criminal law and procedures, use of force, self-defense, physical fitness, firearms training and victim assistance. This training provides the foundation on which the WCO candidates may build when they are exposed to the requirements imposed by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

For the next 24 weeks, the candidate becomes familiar with the internal workings and organization of the agency. Such items as the history of the Commission and the inter-relationship of the bureaus, divisions and sections are covered. Emphasis is placed on administration, field office management, leading a deputy force and report preparation--not glamorous but essential when assigned to a district that is remote from the regional office. Extensive time is spent understanding basic criminal law, fishing and boating regulations, clean streams laws, game and wildlife code, and the rules of criminal procedures.

Essential training is provided on environmental awareness, which covers pollution investigation, wetlands protection, stream encroachment, fish habitat improvement and instream flow and water allocations. Many times the WCOs are the first to respond to environmental incidents, and they have to rely on their past training.

To develop a well-rounded officer, time is spent on improving the candidates' human relations and public speaking skills, which are so important in dealing with you, the resource user. Individual skills are sharpened on fishing and boating techniques, courtesy, conduct of investigations and water-resource and ice-rescue operations. All facets of this training are essential in preparing these candidates to work in the field.

Finally, the candidates get a chance to practice their newly acquired skills and techniques in the field under close scrutiny of a seasoned officer. During these four weeks, performance evaluations are conducted and individual progress is measured. Critiques on how one can do things better are commonplace. All the classroom and field training culminates with graduation and the assignment to field locations where their services are so valuably needed. It's a long and intense period of learning, but all of it is worthwhile.

Who is this WCO? The graduates are the cream of the crop of applicants. They may be single or married, have a high school or college degree, technical training and skills, or possibly they are veterans of the Armed Forces. This past class graduated officers who attended West Point, Officer Candidate School, and Naval Air School. Other experiences included being a park ranger, sales representative, corrections officer, cable assembler and general laborer. What they all have in common is they are leaders who have demonstrated the ability, dedication and desire to protect, conserve and enhance the Commonwealth's aquatic resources and to assist in providing enjoyable fishing and boating experiences. It's now up to them to practice their profession and learn and grow professionally. It's also up to each of us to work with and support these new officers who have been entrusted to protect that which we hold so dear--our water resources.

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Mark Nale photographed this issue's front-cover steelhead angler on Elk Creek, Erie County. Inset steelhead photograph by Walt Young.

Technology

When I became editor of *Pennsylvania Angler* in 1982, no one in the Bureau of Education and Information used a computer. Subscription names were stored singly on metal plates. Articles were typed, edited and retyped. The typed copy was sent for typesetting, which I then cut and pasted onto boards for the printer. These days, all subscription data is stored on the Commission's mainframe computer. Commission Graphic Services' Chief Ted Walke designs and produces *Pennsylvania Angler* on a computer. He also produces and scans some photographs and artwork digitally. Most articles in the *Angler* are also now created on computer. Some articles and "Currents" items, even this item, aren't committed to paper until the issue is printed. For a few years now we've been receiving articles, article proposals and correspondence by way of CompuServe and fax. Most *Angler* contributors send their articles captured on disks in addition to sending "hard copy."

Ironically, many of us computer-users grapple constantly with ever-new technology, trying to understand computers, hardware and software, and their best applications. We're continually figuring out how best to use this science that advances faster than anyone can really keep up.

Is all this foreboding news? No–on the contrary. Even now I could create and transmit this item to the Harrisburg Headquarters from a laptop computer and cellular phone in my boat, between my catching Lake Erie walleyes, Lake Arthur largemouths, Susquehanna River smallmouths, or Delaware River shad. So there *is* a bright side to what sometimes seems like a hopeless technological tangle. Actually, the technology lets us work smarter and more efficiently. Our productivity, in magazine and publications production and throughout the Commission, has greatly increased.

To reach *Pennsylvania Angler* from the Internet, send messages to 76247.624@compuserve.com. The *Angler* is also reachable from MCIMail, AT&TMail, SPRINT Mail, and other services. Consult your electronic mail service for the correct addresses. Our CompuServe address is 76247,624.–*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*

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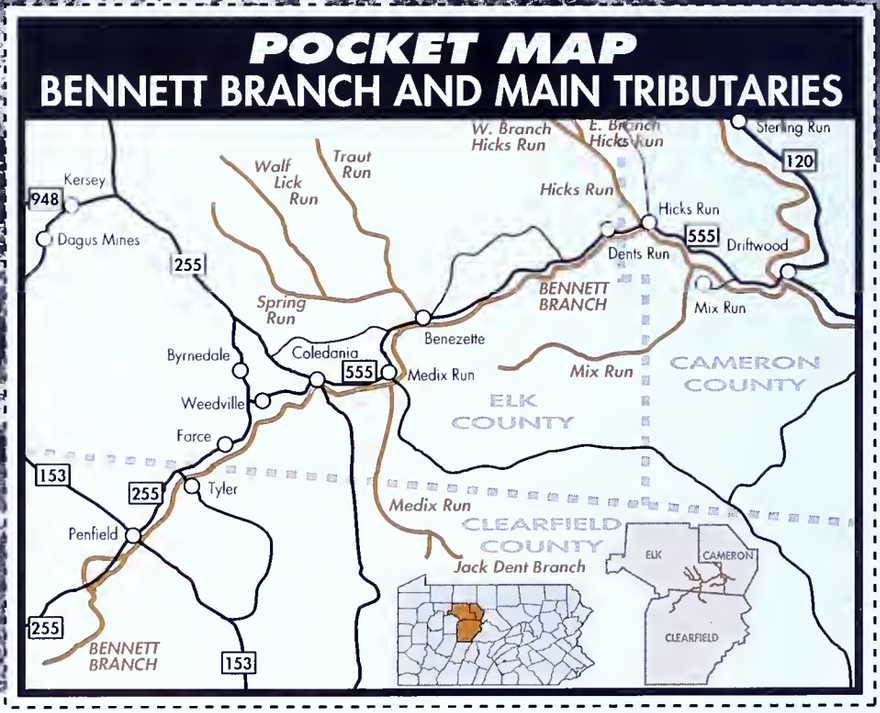
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Bennett Branch

by Bob Petri





Even though trout waters aeross the Commonwealth experienee an autumn revival of their fisheries, for stunning seenery and good fishing in Oetober, few plaees compare with the elear and eold tributaries of the Bennett Braneh of Sinnemahoning Creek in Clearfield, Elk and Cameron eounties, in the heart of northcentral Pennsylvania.

As you travel Route 555 west out of the Cameron County village of Driftwood, the narrow, majestic valley of the Bennett Braneh unfolds before you. With a watershed that drains well over 350 square miles of the high eountry of northcentral Pennsylvania, this is the largest of the three braneh es of the Sinnemahoning. It is also the most troubled. The legacy of the eoal era has left most of the Bennett Braneh devoid of life. In comparison to the reaehes of the eleaner Driftwood Braneh and First Fork, few camps and eabins erowd the Bennett Braneh as it rolls along beside Route 555 and twists and turns down the valley. There is more of a feeling of wilderness here than on the other Sinnemahoning braneh es.

Unlike the aeid-stained waters they feed, many of the small mountain streams that flow to the Bennett Branch are alive and well. Seven stoeked streams give their flows to the Bennett Braneh over its 30-mile journey from Penfield in Clearfield County to the mouth at Driftwood. Oetober is a great time to sample these waters. Let's take a look at eaeh.

Mix Run

This small, produetive stream flows from the south to join the Bennett Braneh along Route 555 about four miles upstream from the mouth. To gain aeeess, anglers must eross the Bennett Braneh on a narrow bridge near the village of Castle Garden

photo-Mark A. Nale map graphic-Ted Walker



and follow Mix Run Road upstream to the point where it intersects Red Run Road. This road parallels Mix Run up into the confines of Elk State Forest.

There are many pull-offs and parking places along the section of Red Run Road that follows Mix Run. The stream in this section is a typical medium-gradient mountain freestone averaging about 20 feet in width. There are numerous deep, undercut banks, small pools and long stretches of pocket water to offer cover for the stream's trout population.

These lower four miles of Mix Run are stocked before and during the season with brook and brown trout. Because of the stream's good water quality and dense canopy of sheltering trees, many of these fish carry over into autumn and are available to the October angler. Mix Run also holds a fair to good wild trout population. The majority of these fish are brook trout, but some wild browns are also present.

Stocking on Mix Run ceases at the stream's confluence with Red Run. Above this point, Mix Run flows through a wild, roadless section of state forest land. These upper reaches of the stream are closed to harvest after Labor Day, but you may want to file them away for a visit next spring. A part of this section of Mix Run is included in the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's Wilderness Streams program.

Hicks Run

This moderate-size stream is the largest of the stocked Bennett Branch tributaries. It crosses Route 555 and enters the Bennett Branch about nine miles west of Driftwood.

The main stem of Hicks Run is formed by the confluence of the stream's East and West branches and is stocked over its entire two-mile length. Hicks Run Road parallels the stream to provide fairly easy access. Even though the lower half of Hicks flows through privately owned properties, it is for the most part open to fishing. The upper mile of the main stem of Hicks flows through the public lands of Elk State Forest.

Because of the stream's size and open nature of the surrounding banks, many of the trout of Hicks Run leave the main stream and ascend one of the branches during the heat of summer. October, however, brings cooler water temperatures and a fair number of the fish return. These holdover trout combine with a scattered population of wild brook and brown trout to make the main stem of Hicks a worthwhile destination for the October angler.

Fishermen who wish to camp in the Hicks Run watershed can take advantage of a state forest campground located at the junction of the stream's branches. There are about 15 unimproved campsites here, and on all but holiday weekends you can usually claim one for your own.

East Branch, Hicks Run

The East Branch of Hicks flows out of a progression of beaver dams and brief, marshy meadows in westcentral Cameron County as it winds to meet the West Branch. Approximately six miles of this waterway, from the bridge on Township Road 310 in

When the colors of autumn sweep over the valley of the Bennett Branch and its beautiful woodland tributaries, there is no place in Pennsylvania more breathtaking to be on a mild October afternoon.

photo Mark A. Nale

State Game Lands 14 to the mouth, are stocked with brook and brown trout.

The East Branch is a small, narrow stream framed by grassy banks in many sections. A scattering of stream improvement devices throughout the stocked section helps create good holding water for trout. Multiple in-season plants of trout combine with a healthy population of wild brook and brown trout to make this stream a better October angling bet than the main stem of Hicks. Brook trout dominate the upper portion of the stream, and a good mixed brook and brown trout fishery can be found in the lower waters.

Access to the East Branch is via a state forest road that follows the stream from its mouth up into Elk State Forest and eventually into the headwaters in State Game Lands 14. The upper section of the East Branch can also be reached by taking Moore Hill Road off Route 120 about six miles west of Emporium. Township Road 310 is a sharp right turn at the top of the first steep hill, and leads through the game lands down to the stream.

West Branch, Hicks Run

A slightly larger near duplicate of the East Branch, the West Branch of Hicks flows for about 10 miles through a densely wooded tract of Elk State Forest. The stream is stocked with brook and brown trout for approximately seven miles from the junction with its tiny Middle Branch downstream to the mouth. Additionally, the West Branch holds a very good population of wild trout throughout its length. Brook trout appear to be most common, but there are also sizable numbers of streambred browns here.

Like the East Branch, the West Branch of Hicks is a relatively small stream, averaging about 15 feet in width. Rushing sections of pocket water reined in by brushy banks alternate with areas that display a good number of small pools and a dense canopy of hardwoods.

The West Branch is paralled by a state forest road over its entire stocked section. Simply turn left at the junction of the Hicks Run branches and you are on your way up into the valley of the West Branch. The stream can also be reached from Route 120 by taking Moore Hill Road to T310 and continuing on this road across the East Branch and on into the upper reaches of the stocked water on the West Branch.

Even though there are adequate pull-offs and parking places along most of the West Branch, in many sections the stream flows down over a very steep hill from the road. There are very few places to park in these sections and the West Branch accordingly endures less pressure in these areas. After you find a parking place where your vehicle won't slide over the cliff or get creamed by a car coming the other way on the narrow road, make it a point to explore these more difficult-to-reach areas of the West Branch. It will be worth the extra effort.

Medix Run

Marion Brooks was an ardent defender of the natural beauty of Pennsylvania who spent most of her life near the Elk County village of Weedville. For decades she fought to save the fragile streams of her home area from the ravages of strip mining. Today, a State Forest Memorial Area commemorates her lifelong struggle to preserve the beauty of westcentral Pennsylvania. One of the streams she helped save from ruin was Medix Run. Today, it still flows cold and clean, a fitting memorial to Marion Brooks and her cause.

Medix Run joins the Bennett Branch along Route 555 at the Elk County village of the same name. The stream is stocked over an eight-mile section from the mouth upstream well into Clearfield County. A fair population of wild brook and brown trout also call Medix Run home. The vast majority of the stream flows through the open public lands of Moshannon State Forest.

Medix Run is very similar in size to Mix Run and averages about 20 feet wide in most places. There are long sections of broken, shallow water here, with fewer pools than either Mix Run or the branches of Hicks Run. The Jack Dent Branch is a small stocked tributary of Medix Run in the upper watershed in Clearfield County. In October, it holds good numbers of small wild brook trout as well as fish that have carried over from the stockings of spring.

Access to Medix Run is easy off of Route 555. SR2004 (the Quehanna Highway) parallels the bottom mile of the stream. Beyond this point, the Medix Grade Road follows the stream into the upper portions of the watershed.

There are other stocked streams in the Bennett Branch watershed, but none of them is as worthwhile in terms of quality angling and good access as the waters we have highlighted. Several miles of Byrnes Run, a small tributary of Kersey Run that meets the Bennett Branch near Weedville in Elk County, are stocked. Short sections of the South Branch of the Bennett Branch as well as the headwaters of the Bennett Branch itself are also stocked. Both these streams are near the Clearfield County village of Penfield.

Tactics

A wide variety of angling methods can be productive in October on the small tribs of the Bennett Branch. Fishermen can do well with either fly or spinning gear. Bait fishing can also be productive, but October often brings some of the lowest flow rates of the season in Pennsylvania's mountain freestone waters, and this can make fishing with bait more difficult than it was in the higher waters of spring.

One key to success on the water at this time of year is to realize that many of the rules that were in effect early in the season have changed. In their rush to stock up on food before winter, the trout become more aggressive in October and will feed actively at lower water temperatures than they did in spring. I have recorded numerous occasions in my fishing log when October brown trout rose well to dry flies at water temperatures in the mid-40s. Earlier in the season, it is rare to find free-rising fish at water temperatures under 50 degrees unless there is significant insect activity.

In October, you can expect to find fish in completely different locations than you might find them in May or July. This is especially true of browns. Many of them leave the safety of their undercut banks and log jams and develop a strong affinity for the slick water at the tails of pools at this time of year. I believe that some of this behavior is preliminary to the annual spawning ritual, but it may also simply be that the trout assume these types of feeding stations to capitalize on the maximum amounts of drifting food items. Whatever the reason, pay particular attention to the tails of pools. Approach them cautiously and look for trout. Later in October, browns are actively engaged in the business of spawning. When you see the telltale shallow depression of clean gravel and a couple of trout rolling and

cavorting nearby, pass by and do not disturb them if you can help it. They are hard at work producing tomorrow's wild trout.

In general, trout in small mountain streams are not overly picky about flies and lures. Most of these waters are what biologists would call somewhat on the infertile side. This means that there is a limited amount of natural food sources, and the trout become opportunistic feeders. The trout of the Bennett Branch tribs are no exception to this rule. You can put your hatch matching charts and books away. Your approach to the stream and staying out of sight of the fish are far more important to success than what you fish with. Wear clothing that blends with the natural colors of your surroundings. Creep, crawl, crouch or do whatever is necessary to get within casting distance of the fish without spooking them. If you can get close enough and offer them something that looks like food, you will more often than not be successful.



Spinning tackle

Contrary to what a lot of anglers may believe, the low water of October is an excellent time to fish streams like the Bennett Branch tribs with ultralight spinning tackle. With a spinning rod, a copper- or black-bladed spinner and a little casting practice, you can clean up on these waters by making long casts to good-looking holding water and then working your lure through it. Cast close to cover and up into the heads of pools when you can. This helps mask the splat of the lure and causes you to spook fewer trout. The long casts help keep you out of the trout's view, and more hits will be the result. This kind of fishing can require a little extra patience on your part. Some of your casts will end up on the bank or hang up on the retrieve in riffles between you and your target. You will pick a lot of leaves and other debris off your lure on about every other cast. Take a deep breath, count to 10 and stick with it. You will hit more than enough fish to soothe your jangled nerves.

A longer ultralight rod in the 5 1/2-foot to six-foot range helps improve the accuracy of your longer casts. Either four- or six-pound-test mono is a good choice for this fishing. The four-pound is probably more effective in very clear water. The six-pound makes it a little easier to dislodge snagged lures, a situation you can expect to find often.

Fly rods

The fly angler should follow the same rules of careful approach recommended for the spin fisherman. Don't do a lot of false casting and waving your rod around. All this brings you is the sight of little puffs of silt and gravel as the trout scatter. Stay low and use a sidearm or roll cast when possible. When you approach a pool, put your first cast into the slick water at the tail. As I said before, October trout like to lie there.

Fly selection isn't anywhere near as critical to success as a careful, stealthy approach. However, there are some patterns that best suit the nature of these streams. Humpies and Wulff-type patterns in sizes 12 through 16 are excellent choices. They ride high through the pocket water sections that are so common on the Bennett Branch tribs, and the trout can't help but notice them. A 7 1/2-foot leader tapered to 4x is about right to fish these flies. It helps provide sufficient punch to turn these larger, more air-resistant dry flies over, and is fine enough not to spook the trout.

If you run into more skittish trout in the pools, try a deer hair ant or cricket. In October, trout are used to seeing these insects fall into the stream and are looking for them. You may want to move down to a 5x tippet when fishing these flies. Sizes 12 and 14 are the best bets, day in and day out, but don't be afraid to go up to a size 10. A lot of anglers believe that these terrestrial patterns are only for use in flat, slow water, but I have found them to be excellent searching patterns in pocket water, especially in the larger sizes. If you are a fly tier, put a little tuft of fluorescent yarn on your ants. This greatly increases their visibility in broken water. If you don't tie, most well-stocked fly shops carry these patterns.

An Adams, Light Cahill and Elk Hair Caddis are also effective dry flies on these streams in October. If you are a nymph fisherman, try a small stonefly nymph in either amber or black or a Pheasant Tail or Fox Squirrel Nymph. In the lower flows common in autumn, stay on the small side when choosing a nymph. Sizes 14 and 16 seem to work best. Weighted nymphs are usually not necessary in these generally shallow streams, but you may want to pinch on a small splitshot to explore the deeper runs and pools.

Even though the choice of fly tackle is an individual thing, I have generally found that a rod of between seven and eight feet balanced for a 4- or 5-weight line does the best all-around job for me on these waters.

When the colors of autumn sweep over the valley of the Bennett Branch and its beautiful woodland tributaries, there is no place in Pennsylvania more breathtaking to be on a mild October afternoon. The richly colored flanks of a wild or holdover trout shining in the sunlight as you bring him to hand adds yet another wonderful dimension to the experience.

BEAD-HEAD

by Walt Young



The distinctive combination of attraction, weight, and action surely accounts for most of the Bead-Head's remarkable fish-attracting power.



Bead-Head nymphs attract fish by imparting a bright, metallic flash underwater. Beads may also imitate the shimmer of the gas bubble produced by some emerging insects.

photos-Walt Young

Sometimes a fellow can be too smart for his own good. That's what happened to me when I first saw Bead-Head nymphs.

Almost immediately I dismissed them as little more than another gimmick. Not that I'm opposed to innovation, but after nearly 30 years of fly tying and fly fishing, I had seen my share of quaint ideas come and go. All this experience resulted in some rigid opinions regarding what makes a fly effective. I convinced myself that Bead-Heads were nothing special without ever having tied or fished them.

Even in subsequent months when other anglers regularly began to report success with beaded nymphs, I remained content to ignore them. Then a friend returned home after a summer as a fishing guide in Montana. He assured me that Bead-Heads had produced for him and his clients on numerous occasions and urged me to give them a try.

My final resistance to Bead-Head nymphs faded a couple of weeks later on a day when I was the guide. My clients and I met streamside to rig our tackle and discuss the day's fishing strategy. Autumn had descended on central Pennsylvania just a day or two earlier in the form of the first cold wave of the season. Water temperatures plummeted, making the fishing extremely tough.

Fortunately, the weather forecast called for a sunny afternoon that would warm the stream a few degrees and possibly spur the trout into a significant period of feeding activity. In the meantime, however, I explained to my companions our best tactic for the early part of the day would be to fish nymphs, slowly and on the bottom, in hopes of coaxing a fish or two into eating. We dug through our fly boxes, and I pointed out a handful of patterns for them to try.

"How about a Bead-Head nymph?" One of the clients asked. "I did really well with them out West this summer."

I encouraged him to give them a try, figuring his confidence in the flies would be a plus because persistence can be just as important as the fly pattern on a morning like this. But as the day progressed, it was obvious that the beaded flies were outfishing conventional nymphs by a wide margin.

Three days later I was guiding again. By then I had relented and tied three or four dozen assorted Bead-Head nymphs. Once more they outproduced other flies convincingly. On another trip the following week, Bead-Heads saved the day again. I had been converted from a hard-core skeptic to a certified Bead-Head fan. Since then, beaded nymphs have proved to be the most deadly fly I have ever used for trout in the fall.

Effective transformation

The Bead-Head is an uncomplicated yet unique fly design fashioned by slipping a metal bead onto the hook and then simply tying the fly behind it. Almost any popular nymph pattern, therefore, can be converted to a bead-style nymph. But what is it about the simple addition of a bead that transforms a good fly into one, at times, of uncanny effectiveness?

The first thing the bead imparts to the fly is attraction. Most Bead-Heads are tied with gold, copper or silver beads, which produce a bright, metallic flash underwater. It is also possible that the bead imitates the shimmer of the gas bubble generated by some emerging insects on their way to the surface.

The proper beads for tying Bead-Heads are ones designed specifically for fly tying. They are solid metal with a small hole bored through them to allow the bead to be slipped onto the hook. Because they are solid, they add extra weight to the fly, enabling it to get down to the fish quickly and efficiently.

Of course, weighted flies are pretty much standard fare for most nymph fishermen. What makes a Bead-Head different is how the weight is distributed. Most conventional nymphs are weighted by wrapping the hook shank with lead wire before tying the fly. On a Bead-Head, however, all the weight is con-

BEAD-HEADS

centrated at the eye of the hook in the form of the bead. This gives the Bead-Head a swimming action unlike other weighted nymphs.

The distinctive combination of attraction, weight, and action surely accounts for most of the Bead-Head's remarkable fish-attracting power. But merely tying a Bead-Head to the leader is no guarantee of success. For any fly or lure to perform to its potential, it needs to be fished in the right place and in a proper manner. Bead-Heads are no exception. Here are some guidelines for getting the most from beaded nymphs.



Shallow water

Bead-Heads work best in shallower water, usually waist-deep or less. At that depth, little or no additional weight needs to be added to the leader to get the fly to the fish's level. Too much weight seems to deaden the action of the fly and decreases its effectiveness. If extra weight is needed, try to keep it to the equivalent of one or two size B splitshot, placed about 12 to 18 inches above the fly.

If you spend your time casting beaded flies to the calm water in the center of a large pool, expect the results to be less than impressive. Fast water is Bead-Head water.



Hare's Ear Nymph

Opt instead for the head of the pool, especially the first few yards of choppy water before the flow settles into a more relaxed pace. Shallow pools can be productive, particularly if there is a well-defined channel and moderate current. The best of all possible locations is pocket water, those stretches where the current is broken frequently by rocks and other stream-bottom irregularities.

In moving water, trout need to be efficient feeders if they are to survive. The current constantly carries all sorts of material past the waiting fish. Much of it is inedible, but among the debris there are also ample amounts of food items. The trout must identify and intercept its prey quickly before it is swept out of range.

The design of the Bead-Head nymph is a perfect match for this situation. The weight of the bead gets the fly into the fish's strike zone and keeps it there. The flash draws the fish's attention. Most important, the current causes the forward-weighted fly to wiggle and dive, making it look alive, and therefore irresistible, to a hungry trout.

By imparting so much lifelike action to the fly, the tumbling currents can be your best friend when fishing Bead-Heads. To take full advantage of this situation, it is vital for the fly to drift along with the current, not against it. If the nymph is allowed to drag unnaturally across the direction of the flow, the trout almost invariably ignore it. Even a Bead-Head nymph isn't special enough to overcome poor presentation.

Strike indicator

The simplest aid for fine-tuning your presentation can be a strike indicator. Actually, it should be called a drift indicator



Pheasant Tail Nymph

photos-Walt Young

for this kind of fishing, because its primary function is to allow you to closely monitor and control the exact location and speed of your fly in relation to the current. Even the slightest amount of drag is instantly apparent when you become accustomed to fishing with the indicator.

A floating indicator of some kind is the best choice for Bead-Head fishing. There are numerous varieties of floating indicators on the market. Ones made of buoyant foam or cork work well because they ride high, making them easier to follow in fast or broken water. Another relatively new kind of indicator is brightly colored putty. The stuff floats beautifully and can be molded to the leader in any size or shape desired.

Attach the indicator to the leader above the fly a distance equivalent to about 11/2 times the depth of the water you are fishing. The position of the indicator should be adjusted slightly as conditions dictate. The idea is to let the indicator hold the fly just off the bottom. When using extra weight on the leader, the indicator probably needs to be moved farther from the fly to prevent it from being dragged under. In slower runs, putting it a little closer to the fly gives a better presentation.

Caddis imitation

When Bead-Heads first appeared on the scene, they were frequently referred to as caddis imitations. Although the beaded design has now been adapted to everything from stoneflies to Woolly Buggers, those basic Bead-Head patterns do resemble an emerging caddis pupa nicely, which may account for their exceptional success in the fall.

Bead-Heads always seem to work best when there are some caddis flies hatching. On many streams, the bulk of the insect activity in the fall is caddis hatches. Most of the time, it won't be the heavy swarms of bugs typical earlier in the year, but rather a trickle of flies sporadically throughout the day. But even a meager amount of flies emerging seem to get the trout keyed in to them—and the Bead-Heads.

Of course, beaded flies are just as valuable during the caddis hatches of spring and early summer. In fact, Bead-Heads are outstanding producers all year long, whether there was caddis activity or not. But from Labor Day on, Bead-Heads are hard to beat.

Tying Bead-Heads

Tying a Bead-Head nymph requires no special techniques, other than getting the bead on the hook. Make sure to get the special beads designed for fly tying. These beads are solid metal with a small, tapered hole through the center. Almost all fly shops and mail order catalogs now offer them in a range of sizes and finishes.

I've found the eighth-inch diameter bead to be the most useful size because it fits easily onto the hooks I use. My preference is the so-called shrimp or scud hook. This is a short hook with a slightly curved shank and a wide gape. It hooks and holds fish extremely well. Most of the major manufacturers offer this style of hook. Mustad's AC80200BR and Tiemco's TMC 2457 are two such models. I tie most of my flies on sizes 10 and 12.

When fitting the bead to the hook, insert the hook point into the wider opening in the bead and slide it right up to the eye of the hook. Some sizes and styles of hooks don't allow the bead to slide around the bend, so you may need to experiment if you're interested in tying a fly on a particular hook.

Once the bead is on the hook, you are ready to tie the rest of the fly. Most of the Bead-Heads that have worked best for me are nothing more than a body of fur dubbing behind the bead. I tie these simple patterns in an assortment of colors, and usually at least one or two of them satisfy the trout at any given time.

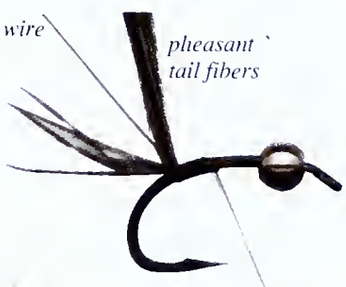
Hare's mask, the same stuff you would tie a Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear from, is a great material for Bead-Heads. Another outstanding fly is one tied with some dark-olive rabbit fur. I round out my selection with a gray one tied with muskrat fur and one tied with reddish-brown rabbit. I also like to have a few tied with bodies of peacock herl. A gold bead is fine for all of these.

In addition to those five patterns, I couldn't resist adapting one of my favorite nymph patterns, the Pheasant Tail, to a beaded version. I'm glad I did, because it has proved to be the best of all. For this one, I use a copper bead. Everything else, the tail, body and legs, is ringneck pheasant tail fibers.–*WY*.

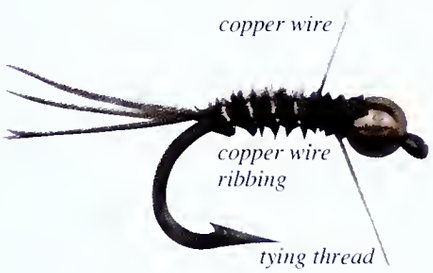
Bead-Head Pheasant Tail Nymph



1. ***Slip a copper bead onto the hook and place the hook in the vise. Tie in a tail of three or four ringneck pheasant tail fibers at the bend of the hook.***



2. ***Tie in a piece of fine copper wire and six to eight ringneck pheasant tail fibers in front of the tail.***



3. ***Wrap the pheasant tail fibers forward to the bead to form the body and tie them off. Then rib the body with the copper wire.***



4. ***Tie three or four pheasant tail fibers on each side of the body directly behind the bead to imitate legs. Whip-finish to complete the fly.***

graphics-Ted Walke

High Point Lake Walleye Oktoberfest

by Jeff Knapp



Rick Lorson's comments were enough to send a walleye maniac like me scurrying to High Point Lake. Lorson, the Fish and Boat Commission's Area 8 Fisheries Manager (southwestern Pennsylvania), had been coming up with magnum-sized walleyes during some survey work, fish in the six- to eight-pound range.

That was a few years ago, and even though my initial trip to High Point didn't turn up any big walleyes, my partner and I did manage to boat a few of the lake's marble eyes, ones of about 16 to 18 inches. They were fat, healthy olive-hued fish with a "Canadian" look about them, like the fish taken from the cool waters of the Northwoods.

Back then the fish Lorson was finding, and we were catching, were the result of the "old" stocking program. For over three years now High Point Lake has been one of a handful of waters statewide getting maximum attention in regard to walleye management. Anglers should soon start reaping the rewards of those efforts. This fall is a prime time to get in on some fine open-water walleye fishing before the lake ices up.

Characteristics

High Point Lake gets its name honestly. It's situated just west of Mt. Davis, the highest point in Pennsylvania. The elevation of High Point is 2,480 feet, putting it a full 1,000 feet higher than nearby Youghiogheny River Lake, located barely 10 miles to the west.

Somerset County is the home of this 342-acre Fish and Boat Commission impoundment, which has a maximum depth of about 28 feet. The lake lies east to west and stretches for nearly two miles. The dam breast is located on the western end and impounds the headwaters of Glade Run. A Somerset County Deputy Waterways Conservation Officer told me the lake's water supply is augmented by several springs.

A few bays and coves provide some irregularities to High Point's southern shore. Its north bank, where the second boat launch is located, is relatively featureless.

The bays, headwaters and shallow zones of the main lake contain some vegetation during the summer and fall months, mostly elodea and wild celery. Water clarity is fairly clear.

High Point's water quality has improved in recent years, though it does suffer from ills caused by acid rain. Alkalinity levels have increased lately, perhaps caused by runoff from a nearby limestone quarry.

photo Jeff Knapp



Once you find the walleyes, you shouldn't have to burn a lot of battery power to stay on the fish. Look for walleyes to congregate in deep water in the channel in the lake's lower end.

Only electric motors are permitted, so bring plenty of battery power, because it can get quite windy up there on top of the world. "There's only about one month of summer there," says Lorson.

Young-of-the-year perch and panfish, along with bluntnose minnows and shiners, make up the bulk of the diet of High Point's walleyes and other gamefish. From observations made when I've fished the lake in the late summer months, the forage base appeared quite good. Young-of-the-year perch and panfish should reach bite-sized proportions when fall rolls around, which can be both good and bad for the angler.

Walleye management

High Point Lake is one of the Fish and Boat Commission's "experimental walleye lakes," part of an aggressive effort on the part of the agency to better manage the state's walleye resource.

This effort is multi-faceted, and includes stocking walleye fry, and several sizes of fingerlings, and then checking via lake surveys to see which size class (fry, early fingerling or advanced fingerling) provides the best rate of survival.

According to Bob Lorantas, Commission Warmwater Unit Leader, one of the primary objectives of the program is to provide anglers with better walleye fishing.

"We want to provide fishermen with a quality fishery, so we want to know which stocking scheme works best," says Lorantas. "Obviously, releasing fry is much less expensive than releasing small fingerlings. Small fingerlings are much less expensive than large fingerlings. However, it doesn't benefit anglers to stock fry or small fingerlings if they don't survive, so we want to get a handle on what's working."

Lorantas said much of the technology used to help make these determinations is new. Chemical immersion, a dip into a tetracycline-treated bath, marks the inner ear of the fish in a manner similar to the rings of a tree.

Different lots of stockings can be marked to allow biologists to differentiate among them as well as distinguish wild fish.

In the case of High Point, the old management plan called for alternate stockings of walleye fry or fingerlings on an alternate year basis, according to Lorson. Starting in 1991, the lake began to receive early fingerlings at a rate of 40 per acre, twice the former rate. Stockings are now done annually instead of every two years.

Though angler success rates haven't yet indicated any dramatic increase, that may soon change because the 1991 plants are now over three years old. Though it's not always wise to compare two different lakes, I can attest to the dramatic turnaround of the walleye fishing on Cambria County's Glendale

"High Point is predominantly a live bait lake, live shiners mostly. Other things catch fish, but shiners seem to be the best."

photo-Jeff Knapp

High Point Lake Walleye

Octoberfest

Lake when the Commission initiated a program that called for a similar stocking scheme. And in the case at Glendale, surveys conducted before the 40 early fingerlings/acre stocking indicated a total collapse of the walleye fishery. With High Point, things before the 1991 stocking didn't look bad.

According to data compiled during Lorson's 1989 survey work, trap nets captured walleyes ranging from 13 to 28 inches, fish up to nine years of age. Nighttime electrofishing netted walleyes at the rate of 12 per hour.

"There were enough fish in the seven- to eight-year-old range to make things interesting," notes Lorson.

Tactics

Al Merschat, a tackle store owner from the Farmington area, says that so far angler success has remained decent on the lake, but has not improved dramatically.

"It has stayed about the same. But I think things will improve–it just takes time," he says.

If you go to High Point this fall, carry along your minnow bucket. Merschat says you may well need it.

"High Point is predominantly a live bait lake, live shiners mostly. Other things catch fish, but shiners seem to be the best."

During the fall, in many lakes walleyes tend to congregate in the deeper water. From what Merschat says, this is true in High Point as well.

"Most of the anglers fish in the creek channel, down near the breast. They fish shiners on bait rigs. Others vertically jig with jigging spoons," Merschat says.

As I mentioned earlier, the autumn forage bloom that occurs can both help and hinder anglers. With such a plentiful forage base it can make walleyes difficult to catch. They can be too well-fed. From my experience this is usually temporary. The combination of predation and natural mortality caused by the cold water thins out the food supply. Walleyes that are still on a feeding binge are quite catchable once the natural food level drops.

We see this on Pymatuning Lake, one of the state's better walleye fisheries. Catching 'eyes out there in early or mid-October can be like pulling teeth. Wait a few weeks and things tend to change.

One of the disadvantages of fishing an "electrics only" lake is that it's tough to cover water in search of fish. The bad news is that in fall, walleyes tend to school in defined areas. So you have to look. The good news is that once you find them, you shouldn't have to burn up a lot of battery staying on the fish.

As Al Merschat mentioned, walleyes tend to congregate in the creek channel in the lower end of the lake. This shortens the search considerably.

The depths here run nearly to 30 feet. The channel is quite recognizable on a sonar unit, and in places has some deep wood, probably tree stumps and roots, hanging along its edge.

Fall walleyes love to hang around cover of this nature. Several tactics dupe them. Consider Merschat's method of bait-rigging shiners.

• **Rigging.** When working depths of 20 to 30 feet, a 3/8-ounce slip sinker should do the trick. Use a light-wire bait hook, size 2 or 4, to fish a good-sized golden shiner, and I do enjoy fishing big minnows in the fall, ones up to four inches long.

I like to keep the snell length short, about 1 1/2 to two feet, at least at first. Long snells leave a lot of distance between your sinker, which you control, and the bait, which you can't control. That's what makes rigging a natural presentation. But the price you pay is total control over the bait. It's like a dog on a long leash.

If fish are suspended well up off the bottom (which will be evident on your sonar), a short snell won't do it. You may opt to go to a longer snell, up to six feet or so, and a floating jig head. Boat movement needs to be slow to allow the floating jig head to rise up. But under these conditions (suspended walleyes) bait rigging might not be the best option.

At these depths you can fish in a vertical manner, hovering over the creek channel with the electric motor, slowly covering water as you go. If a faint breeze is present you can use it to push you along, making corrections in your course with the electric motor.

It pays to carry marker buoys, to mark not only caught fish, but good-looking cover and structure as well.

• **Jigging Bait.** Bait rigging isn't the only way to fish a minnow, because a leadhead jig accounts for plenty of shiner-caught walleyes in the fall. I like to use a simple short-shanked roundhead jig, usually a 1/4-ounce. For fishing these big minnows I incorporate a stinger hook, a size 10 treble and a length of 8- or 10-pound mono. I tie the stinger off on the eye of the jig (or the second "stinger" eyelet if one is provided), leaving about four to five inches of line between the hook and the jig. Insert one of the treble hook's tines into the upper back of the minnow to keep it from snagging.

You'll want to fish the jig-and-minnow vertically, just like the bait rig. Here you have the advantage of total control, though the jig-impaled minnow might not look as natural as one on a light hook. Some days it makes a difference, some not. Experiment.

When you see a school of walleyes hovering over the creek channel, it's a simple matter of yo-yoing the presentation up a couple of feet and sticking it in their faces.

• **Heavy Metal.** I've yet to see a lake where metal baits–jigging spoons and blade baits–wouldn't catch fish sometime during the fall. And on certain days when the fish won't touch live bait, they'll jump on a blade bait or spoon.

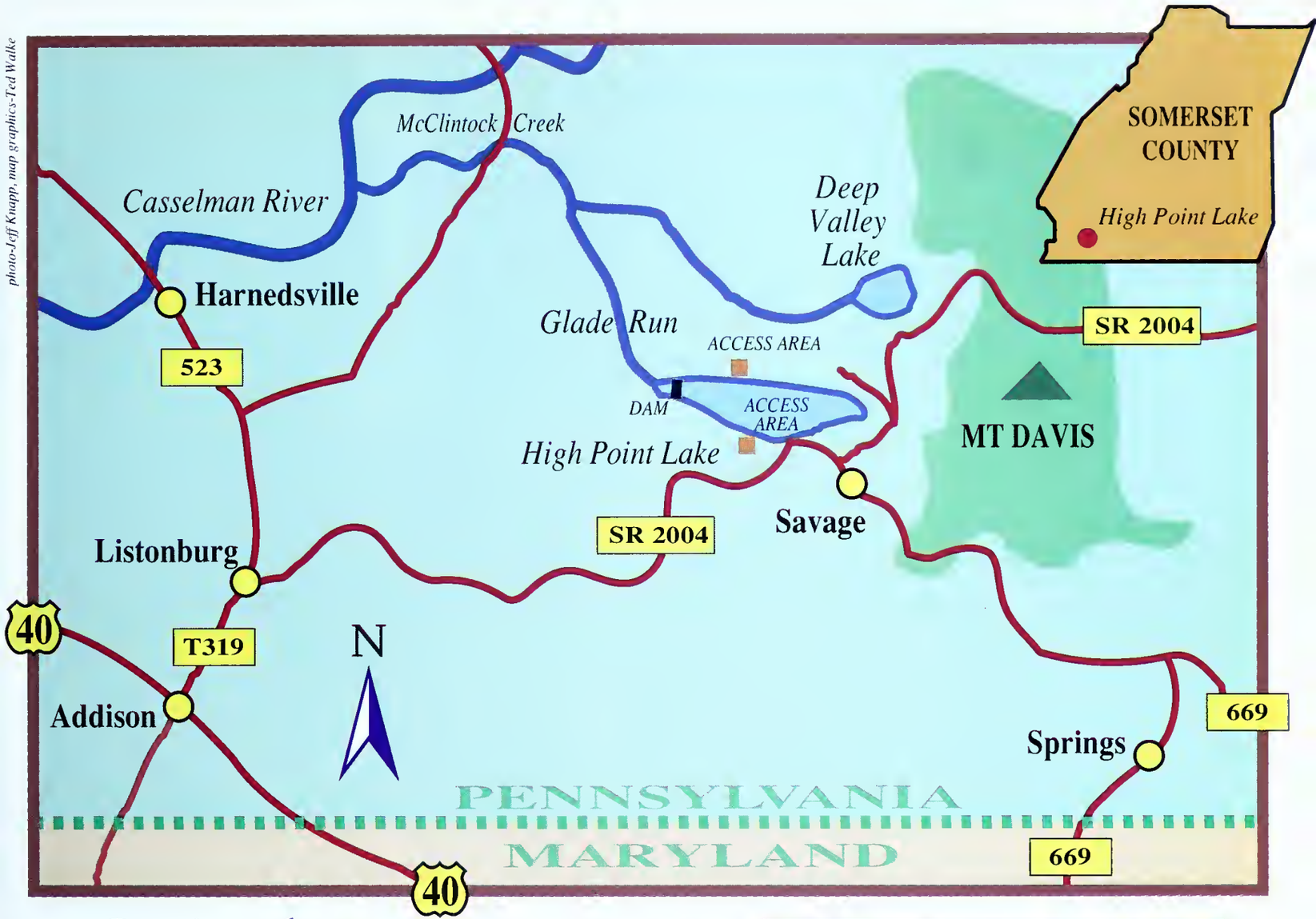
Jigging spoons, lures like the Hopkins Shorty, C.C. Spoon, and Fire Eye Spoon, do best for walleyes when tipped with a small fathead minnow, enough to add some scent but not impede the action.

Once again, the boat will move slowly while the lure or bait is fished vertically. Jump the spoon a couple of feet off the bottom. Then let it fall on a semi-slack line. Let it hover a couple of inches off the bottom. Every fifth jig or so let it hit bottom. Most strikes occur as the spoon "hangs" between jigs.

Blade bait are the name commonly associated with vibrating lures like the Cicada, Silver Buddy, Sonar and Bullet Bait. They are fished without being tipped in a more aggressive manner than the spoon. Rip the spoon upward, and then let it fall on a fairly tight line. Most hits occur during the drop. If you give the blade too much slack on the drop, it will foul a treble hook around the line.

Armed with these presentation keys you should be ready to take on the fall walleyes of High Point Lake, at a time when it's due to erupt with fine fishing.

photo-Jeff Knapp, map graphics-Ted Walke



Getting there

High Point Lake is a bit off the beaten path. The easiest way for anglers coming from the north or east is to get to the lake from the Myersdale area. Just north of Myersdale, pick up S.R. 2004 off U.S. Route 219. Follow 2004 west for about 10 miles to the lake. Both the south and north shore launching areas have a paved ramp and parking lot, just off S.R. 2004.

If you're coming from the west, turn off U.S. Route 40 in Addison onto the township road leading to Listonburg. In Listonburg pick up S.R. 2004 and travel east to the lake, about seven miles.–*JK*.



Other fishing opportunities

In addition to the walleye fishing, High Point Lake offers fast action for northern pike, though many of the fish fall short of the 24-inch minimum length. The fact is, more anglers target pike than walleyes, though that could change when the walleye fishery kicks into high gear.

The walleyes use the deeper water, but many of the lake's pike concentrate in the shallow bays and headwaters, particularly around areas of dying cattails. The pike bite continues after ice-up.

Perch make up the lake's premier panfish. Bass are available, though not in exceptional numbers.

Don't give up on High Point when the ice comes. Because of its high elevation, the lake provides a long hard-water season. Fish location doesn't change much from late fall into winter.–*JK*.

TROUT STREAMS REBORN

by Charles R. Meck



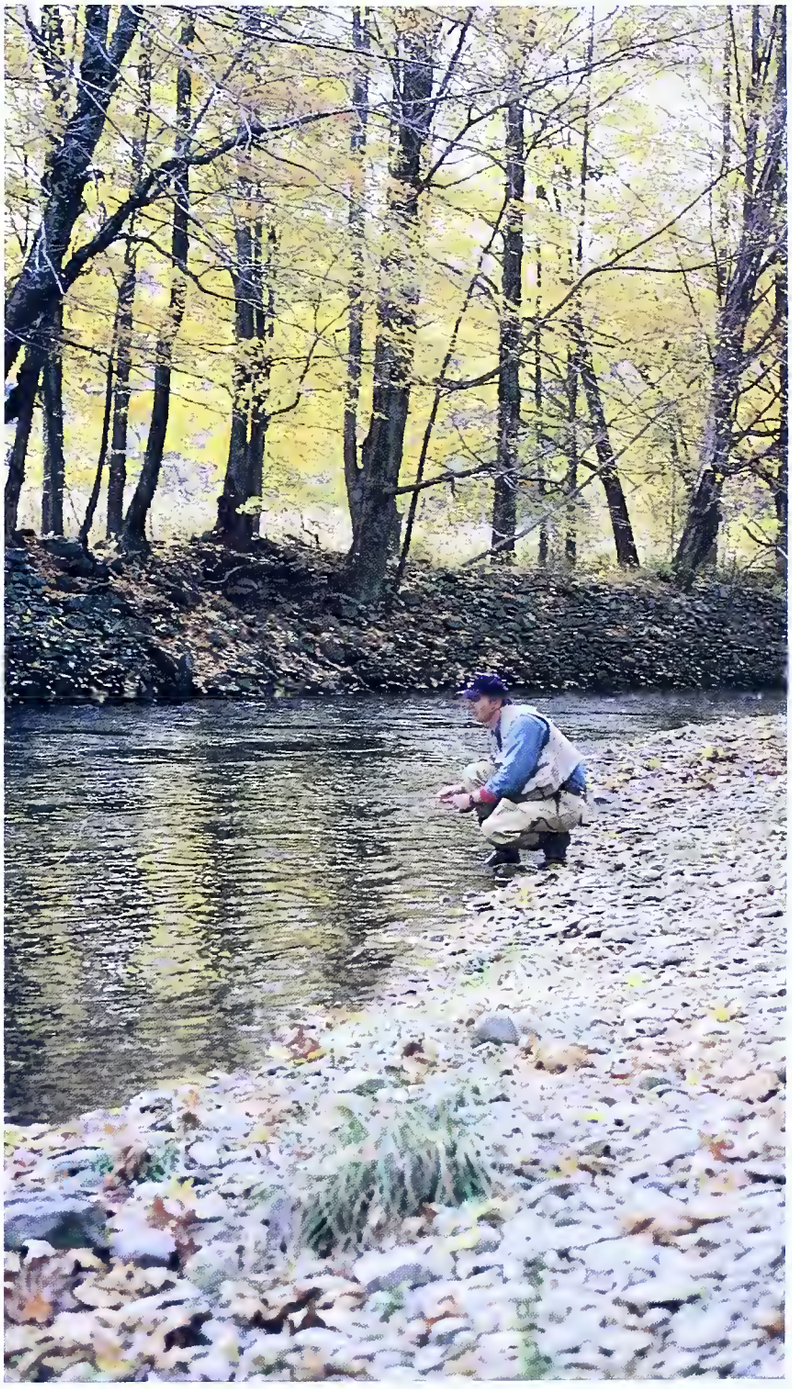
For decades many waters across the Keystone State have been devastated by pollution. Authorities estimate that pollution affects more than 5,000 miles of potentially great state waters. These same authorities calculate that acid mine drainage accounts for well over half of the contaminated miles of Commonwealth water.



REBORN

As concerned anglers we often complain when we lose trout streams to urban expansion, limited public access and especially to pollution. Few of us, however, realize the progress we've made in the past three decades in restoring some of our once-polluted streams to their original condition.

Examine some of the streams and rivers that within the past 30 years have returned from bouts with pollution to be exceptional trout streams again. I can remember vividly 30 years ago when I traveled in central Pennsylvania near Spruce Creek and looked at the Little Juniata River. At that time the river had an unusual odor and dark-brown color. It had trout and some great hatches even during the height of its pollution, but few anglers fished its polluted waters. Now, with the advent of better pollution controls, the Little Juniata River has returned to rank as one of the top 10 streams in the state. Hatches that had vanished from the stream years ago have now returned. The popular late May green drake hatch returned to the river seven years ago. Now, anglers from all over the country travel to the river to fish this huge hatch.



Recently I fished on the East Branch of the Clarion River just northeast of Johnsonburg in Elk County. The East Branch Dam provides this tailwater fishery with plenty of cold water. Water temperatures rarely rise above the low 60s even in the middle of the summer. During a recent early August heat wave, we caught trout all afternoon. Brown and brook trout readily took our dry fly patterns in those cool waters.

Out of sight of most anglers who fish the East Branch is a polluted stream, Swamp Creek, just several miles upriver. A strategically placed liming device on Swamp Creek elevates the pH from 4.5 to 7 or 8. This in turn helps to maintain the East Branch of the Clarion as a viable trout river.

But maybe you live in the northeastern or southeastern part of the state. Are there any waters in these areas that have recently recovered enough and now hold trout? From Toby Creek in the northwest, the Youghiogheny River in the southwest and the Mahantango just north of Harrisburg–you can find recovering trout rivers across the state–within reach of all of us.

What has caused all the pollution in the past? For years drainage from hard-coal mines destroyed potentially great trout waters like the Lackawanna and Little Schuylkill rivers in the eastern half of the state. For decades they held no trout. Bituminous mining degraded western waters like the Casselman and Stony-creek rivers. The effects of past mining practice still haunt these rivers today.

Then there are streams that have other causes of contamination. For years Quittapahilla Creek near Lebanon received pollutants from a large manufacturing facility. When the plant closed several years ago, the stream received a new lease on life.

All these state waters have recovered from recent encounters with pollution and now contain viable trout populations. The Casselman River held an expanding population of fingerling stocked trout until May of 1993 when it received another slug of mine acid drainage from the Shaw Mines complex near Boynton. With the help of sportsmen and governmental agencies forming a "Casselman River Task Force," the potential for improvement again looks bright for this southwestern river.

What about hatches on these recovering rivers? You'll find few insects on many of them, especially those that had previously been hit with mine acid drainage. Some aquatic insects, however, seem to be hardier and can therefore return more quickly than others. On recently polluted streams, some of the first mayflies you're likely to see include the light cahill and sulphur. Both emerge near the end of May on the Stonycreek and Little Schuylkill rivers. Anglers also find that good populations of downwing insects like caddisflies and stoneflies return to these waters quickly. The Little Schuylkill holds good hatches of at least five different caddis species. Stonycreek River in early June harbors decent numbers of giant stonefly adults. These huge size 6 stoneflies bring trout to the surface.

Let's examine a few once-polluted waters including the Little

photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

Schuylkill River and Quittapahilla Creek in the southeast, the Lackawanna River in the northeast, and the Casselman and Stonycreek rivers in the southwest.

Casselman River

What a spectacular river. View this expansive water below Markleton and you'd bet you were on a highly productive Western river. The Casselman River has the potential for a good trout river, but bad times have revisited the river again recently. For several years the river received stockings of fingerlings. The Fish and Boat Commission has monitored the river's water quality since 1983. Finally, data collected in 1991 showed that the river was suitable for trout survival. Since 1991 the river has received stockings of fingerlings by the Fish and Boat Commission. The Casselman Watershed Association and Three Rivers Sportsmen also planted trout in the river for the past seven years. In May 1993 the river received larger planted trout from sportsmen. A week or two later it happened–the river received a heavy shot of mine acid drainage from the old Shaw Mine complex on Boynton. Trout near some of the larger tributaries survived, but the river experienced a severe kill.

What happens now that the stream has become polluted again? When area residents realized how great this river could become, they quickly jumped in to rescue it. The Casselman Watershed Association, Department of Environmental Resources, Fish and Boat Commission, Somerset County Commissioners, and other agencies, organizations and individuals have collaborated to correct the drainage from the Shaw Mines. They formed the Casselman River Task Force and directed the group to come up with solutions to the drainage problem.

Although the river has partially recovered, it has lost many of its aquatic insects. Work has to be done to alleviate other mine acid sources. Area sportsmen plan to restock the river again this year. The Fish and Boat Commission will continue to monitor the situation. Commission Area Fisheries Manager Rick Lorson said if no additional slugs of acid mine drainage enter the river, and if mine drainage abatement projects are completed, the Commission will consider stocking it again in 1995.

What about access to this potentially great river? The work of Somerset Rails to Trails Association guarantees access to the river forever. Anglers will be able to reach the river from the old Western Maryland Railway now controlled by Somerset Rails to Trails. You can reach the river on PA 653 upriver from Rockwood and PA 281 from Rockwood to Confluence. SR 3011 off PA 281 takes you to the river at Markleton.

Stonycreek River

Another river neglected for years flows through Somerset and Cambria counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Stonycreek River, also devastated by mine acid drainage, has also made a valiant recovery in the past decade. It has progressed from a river void of trout and aquatic insects to one with fingerling stocked browns, rainbows from one to three years old and up to 12 inches, and a few good hatches. As with most trout waters that have returned, Stonycreek River has its supporters. A dynamic group, the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP), along with elected representatives, hopes to have all acid drainage eliminated from the watershed within 20 years.

Len Lichvar and Randy Buchanan, who fish Stonycreek frequently, prefer the section from Glessner's Covered Bridge (TR 565) downriver to Kimmelton (SR 1008). In that area, often called the Upper Gorge by area anglers, you'll find plenty of fingerling trout along with a good number of trout from previous years. The Fish and Boat Commission stocks adult trout from the T515 bridge downstream to the Glessner Bridge (4.1 miles).

Late May and early June present the best times to fly fish over hatches. At that time you'll find the cahill and giant stonefly hatches on Stonycreek.

Few of us realize the progress we've made during the past three decades in restoring some of our once-polluted streams to their original condition. It has required the cooperative efforts of local, state and federal agencies, as well as private citizens and conservation groups.

Lackawanna River

Soft-coal mining polluted many of our western waters in the state. In the eastern part of Pennsylvania, hard coal, or anthracite, mining created havoc with some of our waters. You'll find one of those once-decimated rivers just northeast of Scranton. Here, in the midst of the third-largest urban area of the state, is a highly productive recovering river, the Lackawanna.

Results of a Commission survey conducted during the summer of 1991 found that the river had improved significantly since the last survey in 1979. Locations that were sampled yielded hundreds of wild brown trout where just 12 years before the few trout that were collected consisted primarily of survivors from spring stockings. The unique angling opportunities this river had to offer were immediately recognized and with the support of area anglers, sportsmen groups and the Lackawanna River Corridor Association, the river now has 5.2 miles under trophy trout management.

The trophy trout area is from White Oak Creek in Archbald downstream to the Lackawanna Avenue bridge in Olyphant. The river can be reached off Route 6 and is easily accessible thanks to the Lackawanna River Heritage Valley Authority, the Lackawanna River Corridor Association and others who plan to develop a 40-mile greenway along the river.

Jim Misuira of Blakely has fished the restored river for the past decade. He knows the river like the back of his hand and frequently guides out-of-state anglers on the river. He's seen the river come alive with trout rising to hatches of tan caddises, sulphurs and gray foxes. The best time to see hatches on the river comes near the end of May.

Little Schuylkill River

You'll find another popular trout river just 70 miles northwest of Philadelphia. During my years as a teenager I often walked along the Schuylkill River near Cressona and the Little Schuylkill near Port Clinton. As kids we called both of them "black creeks." Everyone in the area labeled these filthy coal silt-filled, iron-filled, dye-filled and raw sewage-filled rivers with the same insulting nicknames.

For years these waters never had fish. Then, in the 1960s and early 1970s, reduced coal mining activity, Operation Scar Lift under the Governor Shapp administration, tougher mining regulations, and sewage treatment improved water quality to the extent that rumors surfaced about anglers who caught trout in the river. In 1976 the Little Schuylkill Conservation Club started the first private effort to enhance the river. Near its home base in Tamaqua, the club organized shoreline cleanups, began efforts to neutralize mine acid with limestone, conducted water quality monitoring and habitat improvement programs, and stocked the river with trout from its Fish and Boat Commission cooperative nurseries. In 1990 the Schuylkill Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Orwigsburg Area Business and Professional Association began annual shoreline cleanups in the lower Little Schuylkill, establishing excellent landowner-fishermen relationships. This paved the way for the Fish and Boat Commission to create the popular delayed-harvest area at New Ringgold after the agency's earlier attempts had failed because of negative landowner reaction along a nearby stretch. Trout Unlimited also installed habitat improvement devices at the upstream end of the delayed-harvest area.

On a recent trip to the river, I saw anglers from Allentown, Reading and Philadelphia enjoy the great fishing in the area.

The river ranges from 20 to 70 feet wide and holds a good supply of stocked trout from above Tamaqua downriver to Drehersville. A few wild trout are common near tributaries, and in the warmest part of the summer, stocked trout in portions of the river seek the thermal refuges provided by these streams.

Aquatic insects like the little blue-winged olive dun, sulphur, light cahill and gray, green, brown and tan caddises produce the best hatches on the river. Plan your trip for the third or fourth week in May to hit the sulphur and light cahill.

Joe DeMarkis, Todd Seigfried and Dave Derbes of the local Trout Unlimited chapter and Ray Ripko of the Little Schuylkill Conservation Club have coordinated many of the cleanup efforts.

Quittapahilla Creek

The Quittapahilla Creek in Lebanon County touches on the municipalities of Lebanon in the upper reaches and Annville midway through its length. This stream is influenced by limestone geology and spring tributaries, including the trout-stocked Bachman Run and Snitz Creek near Annville.

Historically, Fish and Boat Commission attempts to manage the Quittapahilla with catchable trout had met with failure. This was caused largely by the Bethlehem Steel discharges containing toxic levels of cyanide. The stream had been added and deleted from the trout stocking program several times during the 1960s. The stream had last been removed from the program in 1967 following a fish kill, and there were concerns that water quality was continuing to deteriorate because of municipal and industrial pollutants.

Bethlehem Steel, by the mid-1980s, had reduced plant operations and had discontinued the use of cyanides in its processing operation.

A survey by Fish and Boat Commission biologists in August 1984 found considerable improvement in water quality. Problems of over-chlorination by the Lebanon Sewage Treatment Plant, first encountered during a 1977 survey, had also apparently been corrected.

That 1984 biological survey of the stream reach between the confluence of Bachman Run and Swatara Creek identified 25 fish species representing a number of size/year classes. Several brook trout and brown trout, stocked in the spring by the Hershey Hooks and Horns Cooperative Nursery, were also captured. Beetles, crayfish, scuds and cressbugs dominated the macroinvertebrate community, which was to be expected in the silted, non-diverse substrate of a low-gradient limestone stream. Macroinvertebrate collections made over the years at DER's Water Quality Network Station had shown an increase in species diversity combined with a shift to more pollution-sensitive species.

Fish and Boat Commission biologists had always known that the Quittapahilla Creek had sufficient flow and water temperature that would support a year-round coldwater fishery, and with the exception of urban-related and agricultural-related problems, the stream seemed with the 1984 survey to have outlasted the toxic pollutants that had plagued it in the past.

Beginning in 1985, Commission biologists returned several stream reaches to the catchable trout program. In 1992, with landowner cooperation and through the efforts of Commission biologists and waterways conservation officers, a 1.1-mile delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only stream section was added in the Annville area to provide additional diversity to the trout angling experience.

Recently Dick Henry, Bryan Meck and I fished the delayed-harvest section on the Quitty. We arrived at the stream at noon in mid-September. At that late date in the season you expect to see a few trout. But within an hour we caught more than a dozen browns. Yes, the Quitty has returned–returned from a stream devoid of trout to a productive one holding plenty of hatches and holdover trout.

Someone once asked me why I spotlighted recovering waters in the Commonwealth. Some say that these rivers need time to recover and should not be highlighted. Look at what happened recently on the Little Schuylkill River as a reason for featuring them. During one afternoon a heavy slug of silt entered the river near Tamaqua. Anglers fishing on the river when the spill occurred quickly reported the incident to the PA Department of Environmental Resources and the Fish and Boat Commission. Within days they caught and fined the perpetrator.

Look at the recent slug of mine acid on the Casselman River. Had the pollution occurred a decade or so ago, no one would have cared about the river's recovery. But once the Casselman received publicity on its partial recovery as a trout river, it acquired hundreds of friends. These friends will continue to protect it from its ominous past.

Streams need friends–recovering streams need even more.

Special thanks for help in preparing this article go to Richard A. Snyder, Chief of the Commission Fisheries Management Division, and to Area Fisheries Managers Bob Moase, Mike Kaufmann, Larry Jackson, and Rick Lorson.

SMALLMOUTHS and FALL COLORS

by Mike Bleech

Pennsylvania is just about the prettiest place on earth during fall. Fall cold fronts push clean, white clouds across rich, blue sky. Urged by cooling temperatures and shorter days, northern hardwood forests change colors from green to blazing reds, yellows and golds, making the hemlocks and pines appear even greener than usual. Waves of migrating birds and smallmouth bass fill the sky.

Smallmouth bass? Summer is past, tourists are back home, and even most anglers have given up smallmouth bass fishing for the year, which is a real shame. Some of the best smallmouth bass fishing arrives with the fall colors.

The fall smallmouth bass fishing peak begins after turnover, a natural occurrence during which lake temperatures drop to the point where their waters mix. The term "turnover" is a bit misleading, giving the impression that deep water and surface water do a flip-flop as if they were turned by a giant spatula. A better description of the phenomenon is "blend."

Turnover seems to disorient bass and other fish. Fishing is typically difficult during and immediately following turnover.

The fishing peak begins gradually as the water temperature declines through the high 50s. Rather that trying to be too specific about the timetable for this fishing peak, look at the way it typically happens. You should have no trouble recognizing the peak once you know the signs.



photo-Mike Bleech

Triggered by the first frosty nights, turnover occurs early in September at some of the smaller northern lakes, like East Branch Lake, and a week or so later at the much larger Allegheny Reservoir. Moving southward through Pennsylvania, it happens progressively later in September. We are inclined to stay indoors while the temperature is dropping. Fishing usually is unproductive anyway, if it is even possible. Fall cold fronts are usually accompanied by brisk winds that churn up whitecaps.

You will probably first notice the fishing peak during the first warming trend after turnover. When the air calms and the temperature stabilizes at a comfortable level, I get back on the water as soon as I can. Smallmouths will be over the same rocky bottom they have been using through summer, perhaps less inclined to be in very shallow water. They will seem more aggressive. By this time the water surface temperature is usually in the mid-50s.

This is topwater time, an exciting time for smallmouth enthusiasts. Smallmouths tend to be very aggressive with an eye toward the surface. They are not constantly feeding, of course, but when they do they are more catchable than they have been since spring.

Fall fishing peaks, and this is the case with several other gamefish, are at least partly caused by the relative scarcity of natural food. Natural food is most abundant during late spring and summer. Bass do not have to look far for a meal then. By fall most of the abundance of summer has already been consumed, so smallmouths had better not be too choosy, and they had better attack quickly before another fish gets the meal first.

Topwater lures continue to be effective while the water temperature falls through the high 40s. Smallmouths become less inclined to attack fast-moving lures, or surface lures, though. Crankbaits and jigs are effective all through this temperature range, with jigs becoming relatively more effective when the water temperature hits the mid-40s.

Leaves have turned brown by this time. Each wind brings more to the ground. It happens in the third or fourth week of October in the northern counties, later to the south. If we are lucky–it does happen most years–we have an Indian summer, maybe the best days of the whole year. It is the time the word "balmy" is meant for–still air broken only by an occasional breeze, lots of puffy clouds, mostly white but with dark edges, silhouetted against washed-out blue sky. You may need a jacket in the morning, and you might get chilled when running across the lake, but by mid-morning you will be stripped down to your flannel shirt.

This is trophy smallmouth time! It is your best opportunity in Pennsylvania to catch big smallmouths.

You might have trouble finding the big smallmouths. But if you do you will probably have found a honey hole. Big smallmouths tend to bunch up as the water temperature falls through the mid-40s. If you go about it right you might catch more big smallmouths in half a day than most anglers will catch in a lifetime.

If you have been catching smallmouths earlier in the fall, the late-fall honey hole is nearby. It might be over obvious structure such as a point, a hump or a long dropoff, or over less obvious structure like a break between mixed rubble and soft bottom, or an indistinct change in slope. The key element is the closeness of relatively deep water, maybe seven feet, maybe 20 feet, depending, I suspect, on water clarity.

Locating late-fall honey holes poses a challenge because bait must be presented slowly and right in front of the smallmouths. The only way to do it is to get out there and cover water, unless you have friends who will share this valuable information. When you find one, mark the location precisely, because it will probably be good every fall. Your success will improve each year as you discover more honey holes.

The peak fades more abruptly than it begins. Inevitably another cold front follows Indian summer. If it takes the water temperature below 40 degrees, you probably should hang up your smallmouth gear for the season. But if your last outing was a memorable one, if another break in the weather stops the water temperature decline in the high 30s, you might want to haul that gear back out again. But it is probably over.

The fall peak might linger through December in our southernmost lakes. Up north it might be finished by early November.

Topwater fishing

If you ask 100 smallmouth bass fishing enthusiasts what their favorite kind of smallmouth fishing is, at least 90 of them would reply, surface lures!

Topwater lures are not only great fun, they are also very effective. Smallmouths are probably more likely to strike surface lures than any of our other gamefish, save trout during hatches. There are many times when topwater lures are the most productive lures.

We can separate most topwater lures into a few categories: poppers, wobblers, walking baits, buzz baits, and twitch lures. Smallmouths go for all of these.

Poppers are distinguished by flat or concave leading ends that create a *pop* or *ploop* sound when the lure is twitched. These lures should be retrieved in a series of twitches. One approach is to let the ripples settle after the lure lands on the water. Twitch it once lightly and then let the ripples settle again. Continue this process to complete the retrieve. Another approach is to jerk the lure continually, jerking as soon as the slack line is on the reel.

Wobblers dance side to side as they are slowly retrieved. Essentially they are topwater crankbaits. It pays to pause them occasionally.

Walking baits are among the most difficult fishing lures to master. They are retrieved by a series of short, quick jerks, pausing just long enough between jerks to crank in slack line. The lures dart from one side to the other, and drive smallmouths mad! These are the lures to use when smallmouths are aggressive.

Buzz baits are a type of spinner, usually with a plastic skirt. They are retrieved continually–they sink at rest. Most smallmouth anglers retrieve buzz baits too fast. Try the smaller, 1/8-ounce buzz baits, with black, yellow or white skirts.

Twitch lures are the most versatile topwater lures. Using them requires imagination. Try to make the lure appear as an injured minnow. You can see the lure, so it is easy and entertaining. Several lures can fit into this category, including floating minnow lures, propeller lures and virtually any lure than floats.

Most of my topwater fishing for smallmouths is divided about half and half between walking lures and twitch lures. Between the two lures I can offer the bass a wide spectrum of speeds and cadence. Walking lures are usually best while the water temperature is in the high to mid-50s. Twitch lures might work any time, though they stand out after the water temperature has dipped below 55 degrees.

Jump baits

Smallmouth bass are classic structure fish. Just look for rocky structure and you should find smallmouths in any decent smallmouth water. This is more apparent than usual during fall, when smallmouths gather into loose schools.

One of the more common situations occurs over rocky points. Smallmouths gradually retreat deeper down the point as the water temperature falls. On a short-term basis they move up the point when they become active, often busting schools of shiners. Some smallmouths do this through the summer. They are usually what are referred to as "school bass," generally no bigger than 2 1/2 pounds. During fall, though, big smallmouths get into the act.

Jump lures, heavy lures that are retrieved by hopping them along the bottom, can be worked all along a point, from deep water to shallow. One of the best types of jump lures for fall fishing is what I call the "bat wing lure." These lures consist of a lead body cast onto a metal blade. Examples are the Sonar, Silver Buddy and Cicada.

The drawback to these lures is that they do tend to get snagged frequently. But they are very effective, and they can be worked at virtually any depth.

Retrieving bat wing lures requires sensitivity and timing. Let the lure sink to the bottom after the cast. Then hop it by jerking the rod tip back. Quickly return the rod to the forward position and retrieve the slack line. Reel in just slack line. Let the lure sink back to the bottom without moving it any farther than the hop. When the lure hits the bottom again, hop it again. Repeat this procedure to complete the retrieve.

You should fall into a rhythm with this retrieve. Lift and drop, lift and drop, lift and drop. Each time you lift you feel the weight and the vibration of the lure. When the lift ends the line goes slack, then the lure pulls the line as it drops. You might feel the lure hit bottom, or you might notice that the line is no longer moving toward the lure. After a few casts the timing between lifts should become automatic.

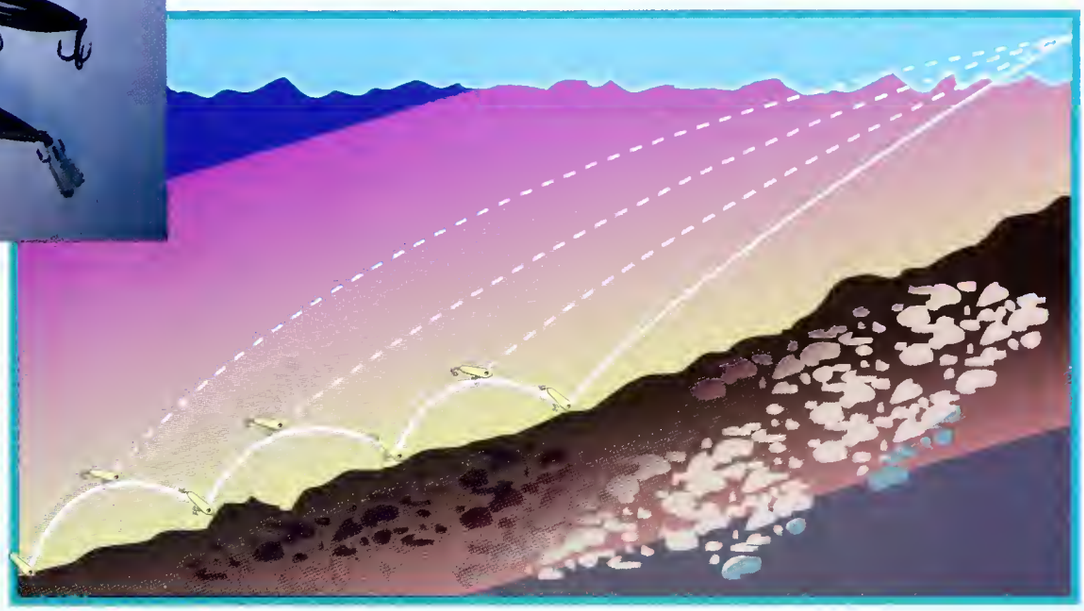
Most bass hit the jump bait while it is dropping at the end of a hop. Detecting hits is difficult. Even though you may not feel some hits, you should be alerted to the hit by the break in rhythm. More often than not, you hook fish when you hop the lure.

Jump lures can be effective all through fall while the water temperature falls through the 50s and 40s. By the time the water temperature is in the mid-40s, though, live bait is probably a better choice.

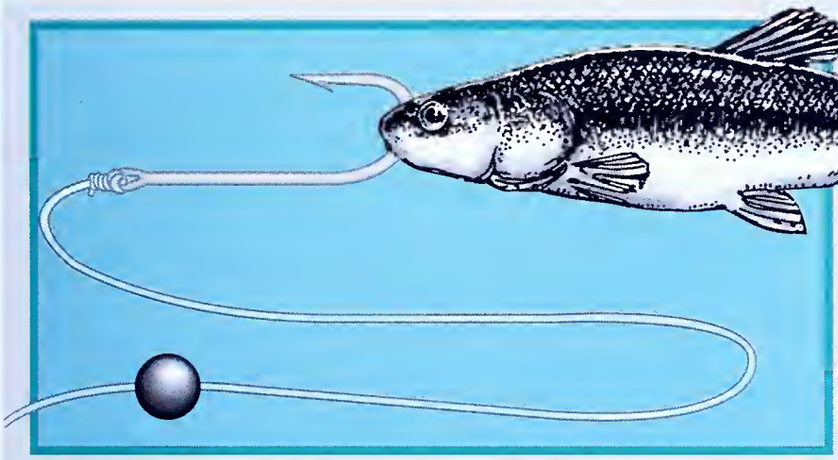


Save the Sport!

When you locate smallmouths during fall, you usually locate many. It is very possible to hurt the population of big smallmouths at this time. I have seen it happen. At each honey hole it is entirely likely that every big smallmouth that resides in a large area during the rest of the year is there. So please release most of your catch.–*MB*.



At right, *jump baits are hopped along the bottom. They can be fished at any depth. Most jigs fit into this category. Smallmouths usually hit them as they are sinking at the end of a hop.* ***Below,*** *lip-hook minnows with fine-wire, wide-gap hooks. Use just enough weight to get the minnow near the bottom. Avoid any extra rigging because you want the bait to appear natural, and the smallmouths will have plenty of time to examine it.*



The best method for catching big smallmouths in Pennsylvania that I know involves live minnows during late fall. Key elements in this method are late-fall congregation of the biggest smallmouths, large, lively baits, and a slow, precise presentation.

Live minnows

The best method for catching big smallmouths in Pennsylvania that I know involves live minnows during late fall. Key elements in this method are late-fall congregation of the biggest smallmouths, large, lively baits, and a slow, precise presentation. This method catches smallmouths all through the fall peak fishing period, but it really shines when the water temperature is in the low-40s.

First you must find the smallmouths, which is the most difficult part of this game. I suggest using a jig and minnow. This combination lets you fish about as fast as possible for this situation. Use either a plain leadhead or one dressed with a bucktail or plastic. I prefer an undressed jig head, unless my minnows are small. Then I add bulk with a dressed head. Hook the minnows upward through both lips.

After smallmouths are located, I lip hook minnows with fine-wire, wide-gap hooks. I use just enough weight to keep the bait close to the bottom. Then I still-fish, or move the bait a few feet every few minutes. Give those big smallmouths plenty of time to study your bait.

My favorite bait minnows for this situation are stonerollers and common shiners. They should be at least five inches long. This is important if you are fishing specifically for the biggest smallmouths. These are lively baits. When they become lethargic on the hook, change the bait.

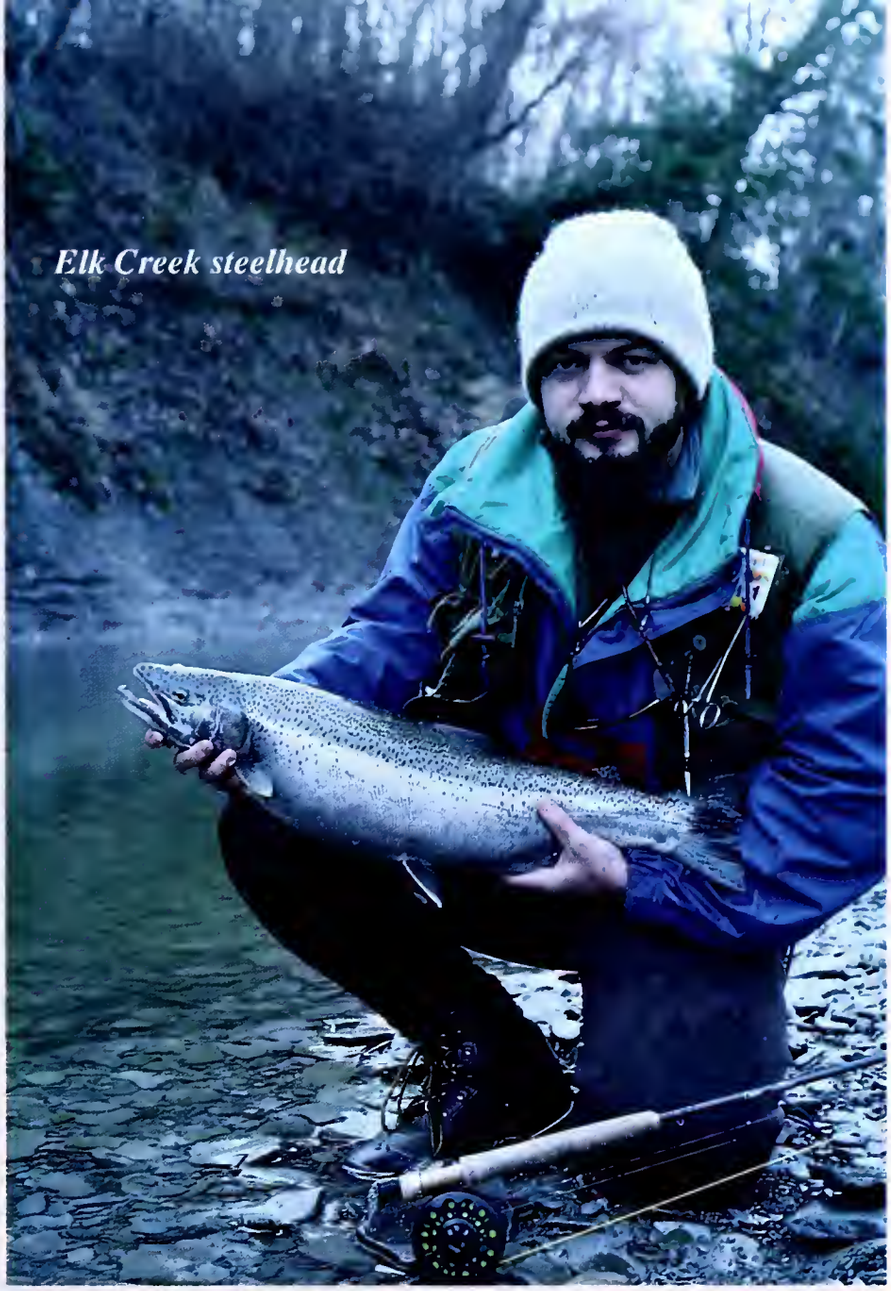


photo-Mike Bleech, graphics-Ted Walke



the Tricks and Techniques of an Expert Steelhead Angler

by Mark A. Nale



Elk Creek steelhead

photo-Walt Young

Six of us shared the mouth of Twelve Mile Creek on this cold winter morning. My anticipation ran high as the man to my left landed a 20-inch rainbow. Moments later, the fly fisherman across the stream caught and released a spunky 18-incher. When would it be my turn?

Although Ken, my fishing partner, had tangled with a big fish earlier in the morning, lately things had been quiet. Ken's tiny wet flies weren't producing for either of us. The cold, murky water seemed to be the problem. Ken switched to a streamer and suggested that I try one of my flashy spinners.

My third cast with a silver and red spinner produced what I thought was the familiar bump of a trout, but my hook-set resulted in a limp line. Maybe it was just my imagination. Another two casts later, as I was cranking my spinner slowly along the bottom, it stopped cold! I set the hook sharply and this time I was rewarded with the tug of a hefty fish. My 5 1/2-foot spinning rod bent double and my light-action reel squealed as the trout headed for Lake Erie. It was give and take for the next few minutes. I gained a few feet of 6-pound test and the steelhead would strip it off again. It was a full five minutes before the trout tired and I was able to lead it to the edge of the gravel bar. My first steelhead measured 23 1/2 inches and weighed nearly six pounds. This was certainly a big trout by central Pennsylvania standards, but according to Ken, just an average Erie fish.

With an average like that, it's no wonder that many anglers from my central part of the state make the trek to the northwestern corner of Pennsylvania. They search for those big silver rainbows that make their annual run into the tributaries that feed Lake Erie. Some of these adventures end in success, while many others end in frustration. I'm big on adventure, but not too keen on frustration.

It was no accident that my first trip for lake-run trout ended in success. To stack the odds in my favor, I usually put a lot of planning into trips to new areas. I did none of that this time, however. I just made one phone call to Ken Wenzel of Springdale, PA.

Ken is the president of the Arrowhead Chapter of Trout Unlimited. I first met him nearly three years ago when I spoke at one of his chapter's meetings. He started to talk about steelhead, and quite frankly, I wasn't too impressed. I'd heard the big fish stories from others before, and I had also heard about the crowds of anglers and the fishless trips. Ken promised trout, big trout, and fishing away from the crowds—and he wanted me to go with him. Although he wiggled a tempting bait, I didn't bite on his offer. More talk at another presentation, a TU banquet, and a tackle show, and I finally decided to give the Erie tribs a try. Now I wish I had taken the "bait" sooner! Ken Wenzel's 18 years of salmon and steelhead fishing experience certainly show in his fly selection, fishing techniques, and knowledge of all of the Lake's tributaries. Wenzel fishes Pennsylvania and New York tributaries to Erie as well as the Salmon River and other New York tributaries to Lake Ontario. For the past several years he has been tying flies professionally and running the Erie Experience guide service. Although I had a good adventure, my outing with Ken wasn't typical. We encountered the conditions that he hates—cold, cloudy water. In fact, Elk Creek, our original destination, was running chocolate and nearly over the banks. The first demonstration of Wenzel's knowledge was finding a stream that wasn't flooding! He did that quickly and we were soon into fish.

On another winter outing, which Wenzel describes as "typical" (if there is such a thing in fishing), he and a companion began on Elk Creek at daybreak. It was overcast and spitting rain when they started at the Route 5 bridge. The water appeared clear in the riffles, but green in the pools. It took them a little while to locate trout, but when they did, their tiny flies really produced. The fish couldn't be seen when they were still, but Ken noticed flashes of silver from the green depths when steelhead turned on the bottom. Wenzel had 18 hookups, landing eight steelhead and a seven-pound brown. His companion had 15 hookups and landed eight silvery rainbows. The fish were all caught on size 16 wet flies.

Seventeen big fish between two anglers isn't bad for a morning, but Wenzel has seen better ones. On one day he guided Steeler place kicker Gary Anderson to a 100 steelhead day! During the winter of 1993-94, Wenzel averaged 30 hookups per outing, landing about half of these fish.

I found Ken to be very friendly and quite willing to share his knowledge of steelhead with *Angler* readers. Here's the lowdown from an expert, a fellow who has battled thousands of steelhead.

photo-Mark A. Nale

the Tricks and Techniques of an Expert Steelhead Angler

Nale: Describe your steelhead outfit.

Wenzel: I like a 9 1/2-foot fly rod, soft in the tip. I use an 8-weight, weight-forward line with a 9-foot leader. The tippet is 4X or 5X, depending on conditions.

Nale: Why such a fine tippet for these big steelhead?

Wenzel: I find the fish extremely line-shy, particularly when the water is clear. You also need a fine tippet to fish the tiny flies that I use.

Nale: Which streams do you fish? Where are the hotspots?

Wenzel: The streams are certainly no secret–Walnut, Elk, Raccoon and Crooked creeks are the best on the west side of Erie. On the east, Twelve Mile, Sixteen Mile, and Twenty Mile creeks produce the most fish.

Nale: Which is actually the best single stream?

Wenzel: I like Elk in the fall, and I love Walnut anytime I find a major run of fish. No one stream is the best. The secret is finding the fish.

Nale: What about the best places to fish on a particular stream?

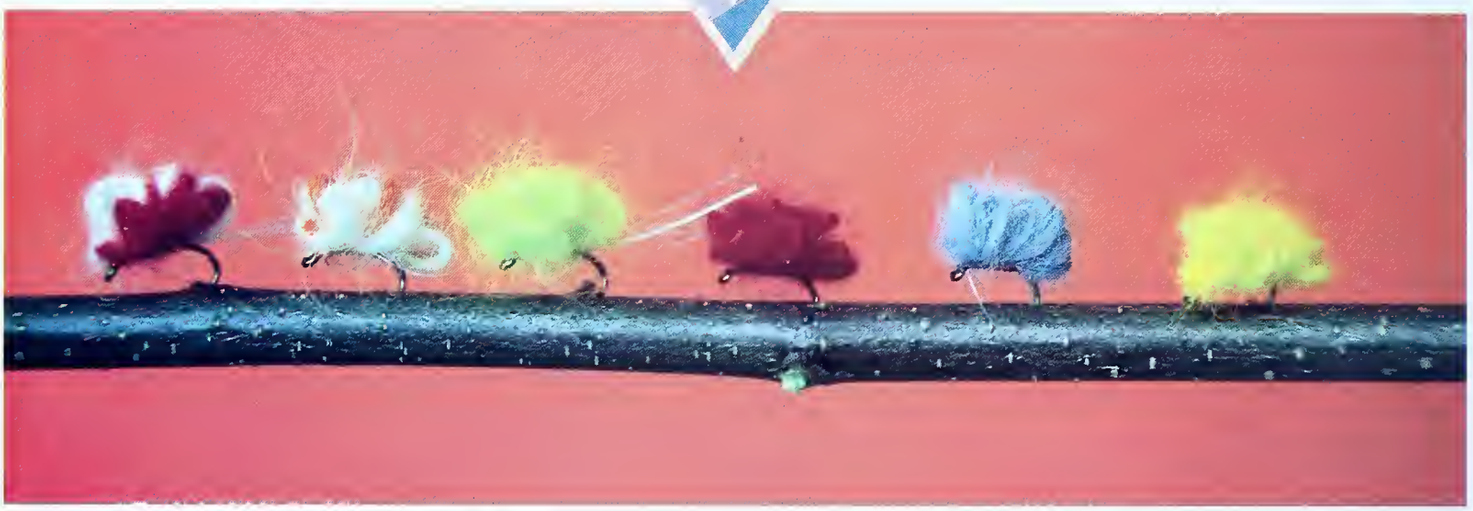


photo-Mark A. Nale

Sucker spawn imitations tied with yarn.

Trout Stamp, Less-Crowded Places

The 1995 trout and salmon permit features two Lake Erie steelhead (right) painted by Wisconsin artist Terry Doughty. Stamps go on sale in December. Wilderness Editions is the publisher and information is available by calling 800-355-7645.



West of Presque Isle, Walnut and Elk creeks are the most heavily fished tributaries. Raccoon and Crooked creeks are smaller, less popular streams, but they provide good prospects for catching steelhead when other west-side streams are crowded. Fishing is also popular in Lake Erie at the mouths of Godfrey and Trout runs–west-side nursery streams where no fishing is allowed directly in the nursery waters.

East of Presque Isle, Twentymile, Twelvemile and Sixteenmile creeks are most popular with steelhead anglers. East-side streams with less angling pressure are Fourmile and Sevenmile creeks. Although access to some streams is limited, some landowners allow fishing if they're asked. Please be courteous and refer to the *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* for specifics on each tributary.

Since 1987, the Commission Lake Erie Research Unit has monitored the angling activity on Lake Erie through a cooperative diary program. For complete details, and if you'd like to participate, contact the Commission Lake Erie Research Unit at P.O. Box 531, Fairview, PA 16415; (814) 474-1515.–*Chuck Murray, Fisheries Biologist.*

photo-Wilderness Editions

"I like Elk in the fall, and I love Walnut anytime I find a major run of fish. No one stream is the best. The secret is finding the fish."

Wenzel: The mouths are good at times, and certainly the areas just below waterfalls and other obstructions are obvious places where fish stack up. I'm not afraid to walk a half-mile for good fishing. Look for access points that are less accessible. There is a lot to learn about reading the water. Besides the places that I already mentioned, when the streams are up, you can find steelhead in many small pockets of calm water. Some of these stay the same from year to year, but others change with each high water. Being on the streams often helps me locate the new pockets after each high water.

Nale: I know that you weren't happy with the cold, cloudy water we encountered. Just what are your favorite stream conditions?

Wenzel: Low, clear water turns off many other anglers, but those conditions are my favorite. I can catch fish when others often can't. I love it when I can see the fish that I'm working. I know the techniques that induce them to strike.

Nale: You said that you like to see the fish that you are working. Can't they see you? How do steelhead respond to anglers in general?

Wenzel: They can be spooked by anglers, but they aren't anything like wild brown trout. Steelhead settle down after a few minutes. Spooky fish actually move out of the way when a spawn sack or big fly drifts by. They don't respond to tiny flies that way, which is another of their big advantages. Steelhead also have a negative response to the hooking and playing of a neighboring fish.

Nale: How close can you get to the steelhead?

Wenzel: In clear water I can be as close as 30 feet if the water depth is four to five feet. In shallow water I usually make casts of 40 to 50 feet.

Nale: Could you describe your clear-water strike-inducing techniques?

Wenzel: First off, I use "down-sized" equipment–small flies, light tippet, a small or no strike indicator, micro shot, or no shot with a weighted fly. I get behind the fish and cast well upstream of them. I like the fly to drift at the fish's level, and it should drift close to the fish. Don't pick up until your fly is past the fish, even if your fly starts to drag. If you pick up too soon, it spooks the fish.

Nale: Most of the fishermen we met were using salmon eggs or spawn sacks. Do your flies really out-produce real bait?

Wenzel: Almost always. As an example, the other day I observed a fellow fishing over what appeared to be 30 to 40 steelhead. After watching him drift his spawn sack over those trout for 15 minutes with no success, I asked, "Care if I give them a try with flies?" I moved in beside him and caught three in a row. The fly's success has a lot to do with their size as well as my ability to fish them. I would say that my success is probably 50 percent fly and 50 percent technique. Any good wet fly angler could probably do the same.

Nale: What about water temperature? How does it affect the fish and the fishing?

Wenzel: As far as temperature goes, 60 degrees seems to be the magic temperature in the fall. The steelhead stage at the mouths until the water drops to 60. Then they move up the tribs if there is enough flow. Steelhead usually don't take moving streamers when the water is cold, but my tiny sucker spawn flies work well even when the water is in the mid-30s. Fall fish fight better than winter fish. Steelhead rarely jump when the water drops below 40 degrees. They also move less to intercept a fly when the water is cold.

In the fall, steelhead sometimes make runs up the smaller streams, only to swim back down to the lake again in a day or two if the water warms. Winter-run steelhead don't do that. They enter the streams and stay there for an extended time.

Nale: Exactly when do the steelhead leave the lake?

Wenzel: The temperature drop to 60 degrees usually occurs in late September or early October. The fish make a run with the first high water that follows. Last winter was special because each high water from September through December brought a new wave of steelhead. There were eight to 10 runs last winter. This hasn't happened for several years.

Nale: Tell us more about your steelhead flies.

Wenzel: They look like a sucker spawn with a few variations. I tie them (weighted or unweighted) in sizes 14 to 22. It's loosely tied with angora yarn in a variety of colors. Usually the flies are each tied with a single color, but an effective pattern named "Old Glory" is tied with red, white and blue. I also add a Flashabou tail for a little sparkle. Generally speaking, I use dull colors in clear water and brighter colors in off-color water.

Last winter a friend, Jeff Blood, developed a new variation that works well. It is a spawn fly, sparsely tied with glow bug yarn—two colors on each fly. We call it the "Blood Dot."

Nale: You fish both New York and Pennsylvania. How do you compare the two?

Wenzel: From my experience, Pennsylvania fishing is by far better. There are three times as many fish. For this we can credit the PA Fish & Boat Commission and the efforts of the 3-C-U Trout Association. One thing that New York does seem to have Pennsylvania beat on is size. The steelhead here average five or six pounds. In New York my average size is nearly double that.

Nale: The fishing here is good. Do you think that it could be made better?

Wenzel: This is a sensitive subject, but here goes. In the past five years I've kept about 10 steelhead. The average guy, maybe 90 percent of the anglers skilled enough to catch three fish, take home three fish a day. To me, this is a crime. One fish is a trophy, or more than enough to provide dinner for a family. I'd like to see a one-steelhead limit on the Lake Erie tributaries. This would spread the fish around to more anglers and make a better day's fishing for everyone.

Nale: Do you have any other words of advice?

Wenzel: Return most of your steelhead even if you don't have to and remember that most of the Erie tributary fishing is on private land. If you enjoy the fishing and want to return, please respect the landowner, and consider releasing some of your fish.

On the Water

with Mike Simmons

Totems

It was bound to happen sooner or later. Still, I felt bad, some might even say melodramatically bad, as I sat on a log at the edge of the stream and carefully examined the broken tip of my fly rod.

I had been walking along the bank, bypassing a long-nonproductive stretch of trout water and thinking about other things, when I jammed my rod tip into a tree. The same thing had happened many times before, but on this occasion the age of the rod, combined with the force of the jab, had snapped six inches from the tip. And as any flyrodder knows, six inches off the tip is the same as breaking the entire rod into pocket-sized sections and using it for kindling.

It was not the loss of a fishing rod that troubled me so greatly. In fact, since I buy raffle tickets with reckless abandon, I currently had two other fly rods, both of superior quality to my broken one, lying in their original packing cases at home. No, my loss was far more serious than that. I had, forever, lost the use of a totem, an artifact of my outdoor life.

Over years of use, fishing tackle (or any outdoor equipment, for that matter) acquires symbolic significance for an owner far beyond its utilitarian value. I have a wicker fishing creel that I have used since boyhood. Today, its bottom remains in place only because I annually reattach it with strong twine, carefully (but very unprofessionally) lacing the string through those sections of wicker that remain unrotted. The top of the basket is hinged with plastic garbage bag ties, and the latch simply isn't there anymore. My wife wants to make a planter out of the thing, but I suspect that the creel's ultimate fate will be a private streamside burial along my favorite stretch of riffle at some future date when further repairs become totally unproductive. The fish that creel has carried are relatively unimportant. The memories it continues to carry, however, are too many and too precious to allow its transformation into a planter.

The same was even more true of my fly rod. Three generations had taken trout with that old fiberglass stick. Many years ago, my mother, who is one of the most avid anglers I know, caught her limit of rainbows using my rod when she discovered upon arriving at streamside that she had left her own rod at home. More recently, my younger daughter, Heidi, took her first limit of brookies from the same stream (and even some of the same holes) with the rod, once she got over the problem of unintentionally pushing the button on the automatic reel and jamming her lure unceremoniously into the front eyelet.

And, of course, between and all around those two occasions were my own experiences. The missing chunk from the smooth, dark, hand-polished cork handle recalled for me an unexpected dunking I had suffered one cold April morning when I fell in a riffle and gouged the handle into a rock. A missing line guide spoke to me of the carelessness of my youth. And the very weight and feel of the rod carried with it the natural comfort of our long association.

All of these experiences and memories are, of course, mere trifles to anyone other than me, but it is just this personal nature and privacy of such moments that imparts immense value to the artifacts which symbolize them. It is precisely that quality which makes worn and weathered fishing tackle so important to each individual owner.

Both of my daughters have special sections of their tackle boxes reserved for "favorite lures." As it turns out, all that is required for any lure to rate membership in those privileged sections is that the lure catch one better-than-average fish. Once enshrined as a "favorite lure," no plug, spinner or spoon is ever used again in any situation where it might be lost. If there is the slightest possibility of a hang-up in weeds or if there might be a fish around sufficiently large to break the line, some other lure is used. When it comes to my daughters' favorite lures, membership does indeed have its privileges.

I remember one occasion in particular when old dad's judgment almost ended in tragedy. Tracy, my oldest daughter, asked if we were fishing in "safe water," meaning that the chances of losing a lure were so remote as to be inconsequential. I said that we were, and Tracy immediately selected a blue-and-white spoon from her special section. I held my breath as she made her first cast, since I knew that she had landed a seven-pound northern pike on that very lure the preceding summer. Moments after beginning her retrieve, the line snapped taut and she set the hooks hard–right into a sunken tree limb.

We moved the boat directly over the snag and she began jerking the rod this way and that, trying to free the lure. Meanwhile, I peered intently over the side of the boat and wondered how cold the water would be if I had to dive for the thing (a dreary prospect that a single agonized look from Tracy had already told me was not at all out of the question). Making one final yank, Tracy snapped everything free and began reeling whatever was left to the surface. Happily, the spoon remained attached, and on closer inspection, we discovered that she had broken one tine off the treble hook.

Ironically, this new imperfection, combined with the tooth scratches left by the fish, made the spoon even more of a favorite. Today, the missing tine reminds both my daughter and me of those hectic few moments on a remote Canadian lake, just as the scratches recall that big pike.

I suspect that for each of us who wanders the streams, such artifacts, whether they be battered fishing hats, patched waders, smelly vests or worn knives, all become visible reminders of our experiences afield. To some we might attribute special luck; to others, revered memories of special events and special friends. To all, we cling as tenaciously as reason (or even the lack of it) will allow.

Totems are like that.

A Special Place for Special People

At right, Fish and Boat Commission President Paul J. Mahon helps celebrate the dedication of "a Special Place for Special People," the name of Lake Scranton's accessible fishing pier for people with disabilities. The dedication last July 21 marked the culmination of efforts by a group of more than 50 people in the public and private sectors and local and state agencies. Commission President Mahon led this effort.

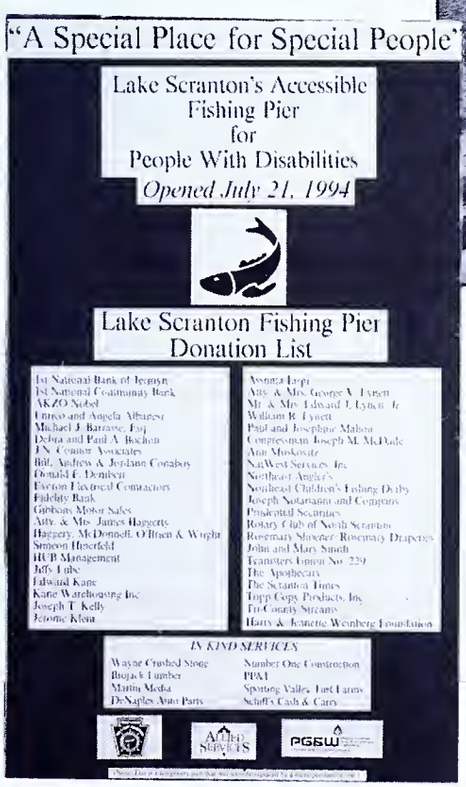




Left, the Lake Scranton project includes a gazebo and pier. Lake Scranton, 400 to 500 acres, is near Scranton, Lackawanna County. There is no public fishing–fishing is open only on the pier to the handicapped.



Planning the project took three years. The construction required four months. The project cost $160,000, all of which was donated.



At right, participating in the dedication were (left to right) Pat Solano, Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER); Al Roman, superintendent of Number One Construction Company; actor Jack Palance; and Joe Ellam, chief engineer for DER.



photos-George Smith

New State Record Freshwater Drum

Tim Rogers, Finleyville, hefts the new state record freshwater drum he caught on May 3. The fish measured 32 1/2 inches long with a 24 1/2-inch girth and weighed 19 pounds, 14 ounces–beating the old record by 10 ounces. The 21-year-old angler was fishing from the shore of the Monongahela River, Washington County, when the monster attacked his bait. The fish was caught on a nightcrawler and brought to shore on 14-pound-test line. Great job, Tim!



Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Crayfish are excellent baits for smallmouth bass. The two best ways to hook them are to run the hook through the tail, with the hook point coming from the bottom out the top of the tail so that the bait swims backward, naturally. The other way is to run the hook through the hard back of the crawfish, making as small a hole as possible.

Even though the majority of your dry fly fishing should be done with the fly drifting naturally, there are many times when skating the fly across the surface produces violent strikes. Also, the next time your dry fly is dragged below the surface by the current, try stripping the fly back to you with a short, jerky retrieve. Trout sometimes hit a sunken dry fly as if it were an emerger.

Streamers are very effective imitations of the minnows that bass and trout eat. Use these flies where minnows are found, mainly in the shallows near the banks, and the tails of pools in streams.

Jigs are deadly lures to use on walleyes. Fish them very slowly, and right on the bottom. Cast the jig out and allow it to sink to the bottom. Then, pump the jig a few feet up off the bottom, reel in a little of the slack, and let the lure fall back to the bottom. Fish the jig in this manner all the way back to you.

illustration- Ted Walke

Trout, especially big brown trout, like to move into the shallows at night to feed. Large dry flies and bucktail streamers often help you to take the biggest fish of the year during these night trips.

When two fishermen are both using fly rods from a drift boat, canoe or any other kind of boat, it is best if they cast to opposite sides. When they fish the same side of the boat, it is too easy for the lines to become tangled.

The best method for getting your fly loose from a snag on the bottom of a stream is to peel off plenty of slack line, and then throw a roll cast directly over the snag. The action of the line rolling over the snag actually pulls the fly off the snag from the opposite direction.

It is often tough to cast a bulky bass bug, or popper, when the wind whips up. The next time this happens, try shortening your leader, and use a stiffer material. This helps "punch" your bug through the wind, and allow the fly to turn over in the face of a strong wind.

Use the quill from the peacock eye, not the plume quills lower on the feather, when tying quill-bodied flies. Strip the fuzz from the quill by rubbing it with a pencil eraser, and then soak it in water for 10 minutes before tying your fly. The wet quill is less likely to break when wrapping it around the hook.

When fishing for bass with a plastic worm, the fish sometimes strike hard, setting the hook firmly without much effort needed by the fisherman. However, the take can often be more subtle. Unless the fish aggressively hits the worm, try lowering your rod tip when you feel the bass pick up the worm, reel in a little slack, and then set the hook.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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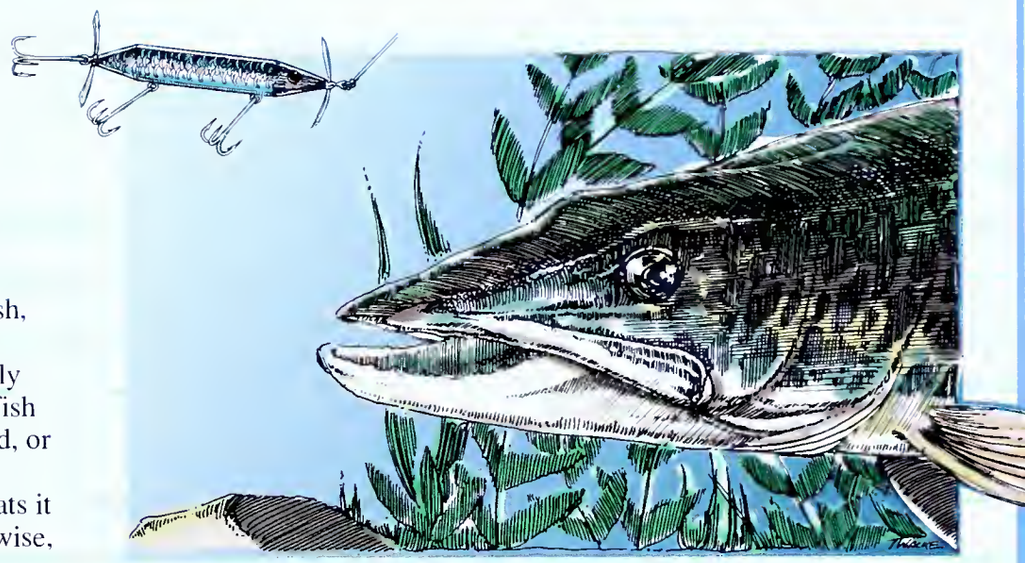
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SMART Angler's Notebook

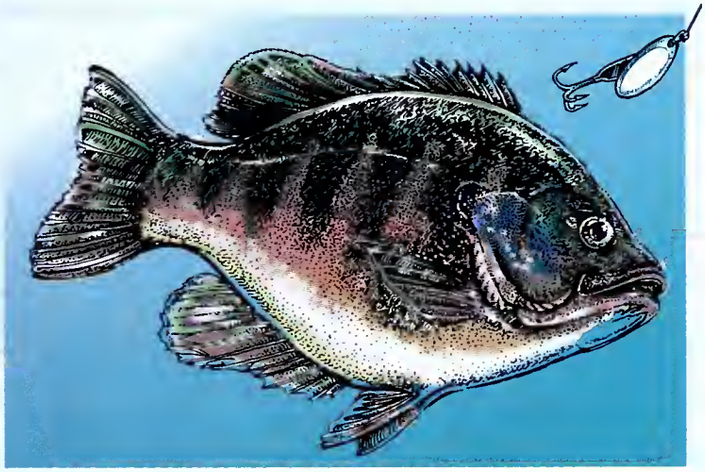
by Carl Richardson

Why Fish Strike?



Why do fish strike?

The answer is very simple: Hunger. Fish, like humans, cannot pass up too many meals. But why do fish hit those big ugly lures that don't look like food? I think fish eat my lures because they think it is food, or because it makes them mad, or maybe because it looks like food and the fish eats it to find out. Until the fish can say otherwise, I will stick to this idea.



Aggression. A reflex action in the fish causes it to eat the lure or bait. This fish may be defending its turf or spawning areas. Or it is just mad. Example: A musky is resting quietly in a nest of stumps and weeds. A brightly colored plug with propellers on both ends rips across the surface, and in a flash the musky engulfs it.

Curiosity. Because it can't pass up too many meals, a fish investigates the lure or bait. To find out if it is food, it eats the lure. Example: A bluegill on the cruise for food spots something. Attracted to the lure's flash and movement, the fish follows close behind. The lure doesn't look like the stuff the bluegill usually eats, but because it can't pass up a meal, the fish grabs the spinner.

Food. The lure or bait looks, smells or moves just like the food on the fish's regular menu. Most of its senses tell the fish this thing is food, so it eats the lure or bait. Example: A smallmouth bass spots a brown thing crawling across the bottom. Your jig looks like a crayfish, moves like one and since you sprayed stuffed on the jig, it smells like one, so the bass eats it.



illustration- Ted Wake

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Straight Talk

Commissioners



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Assistant
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Welcome, Commissioner, and congratulations on your appointment to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). How did you become appointed to such a most important position?

The PFBC, as an independent administrative commission, consists of 10 competent citizens of the Commonwealth. They are nominated by individuals and organizations to the Governor. He, in turn, appoints these individuals with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the members elected to the Senate. When legislative approval is given, they are appointed for terms of eight years and until their successors are appointed.

What qualifications are necessary to be named a Commissioner? Eight members of the Commission shall be persons well-informed on the subjects of conservation, restoration, fish and fishing and boats and boating. They shall be appointed, insofar as practicable, on a political bipartisan basis, and from the various geographic districts of the Commonwealth. Only one member shall be a resident of a particular district. The remaining two members, Boating Commissioners, shall serve at-large and be experienced in boating and water safety education and be registered boat owners in Pennsylvania. Their responsibilities are divided between western and eastern Pennsylvania. On the death, resignation or removal from office of any member, the Governor shall appoint a competent individual to serve for the unexpired term.

Let's now examine the districts as they are defined. Districts are identified as follows:

First District: The counties of Erie, Crawford, Mercer, Lawrence, Venango, Butler, Warren, Forest and Clarion. Commissioner Samuel M. Concilla.

Second District: The counties of Beaver, Allegheny, Washington, Greene, Armstrong, Indiana, Westmoreland and Fayette. Commissioner Ross J. Huhn.

Third District: The counties of McKean, Elk, Jefferson, Potter, Cameron, Clearfield, Clinton and Centre. Commissioner William J. Sabatose.

Fourth District: The counties of Cambria, Somerset, Blair, Bedford, Huntingdon, Fulton, Mifflin and Juniata. Vacant.

Fifth District: The counties of Tioga, Lycoming, Union, Snyder, Bradford, Sullivan, Columbia, Montour and Northumberland. Commissioner J. Wayne Yorks.

Sixth District: The counties of Franklin, Perry, Cumberland, Adams, Dauphin, York, Lebanon and Lancaster. Vacant.

Seventh District: The counties of Susquehanna, Wyoming, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Carbon, Wayne, Pike and Monroe. Commissioner Leon H. Reed.

Eighth District: The counties of Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Northampton, Lehigh, Bucks, Montgomery, Philadelphia and Delaware. Commissioner Donald N. Lacy.

These individuals represent your specific county and are dedicated to listen to and represent your specific needs. They work with local legislators to enhance fishing and boating opportunities and to protect and manage aquatic resources locally. They attend special events, programs, presentations, exhibits, banquets, etc., within your county. They represent you, the anglers and boaters.

How much do they get paid to perform their assigned functions? The Commissioners are not employees, so they are not paid any wages. However, as volunteers, they do receive reimbursement for lodging, meals, vehicular mileage, telephone calls and postage for mailing official correspondence. Money is not what draws these individuals to become Commissioners. Their love for and desire to protect our streams, lakes, habitat, etc., is what inspires them to sacrifice their leisure time.

The Commissioners may exercise any of the powers that a Waterways Conservation Officer can, but that is not their primary responsibility. With the PFBC staff, they develop the policy direction of the Commission. PFBC staff address operational planning and task execution. As a result, it is essential for you, the public, to cooperate with your Commissioner and the Commission staff to determine immediate needs and future regional requirements and program development on a timely basis.

Get to know your Commissioner! You will find he is dedicated to serve you. You may even find the time to wet a line together. He needs your ideas to do his job well. It is essential that we work together to protect, conserve and enhance our most valuable aquatic resources. Perhaps in the future you may want to become a Commissioner of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

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This issue's front-cover walleye photograph was taken by Wally Eberhart.

My ultimate gamefish

Every spring and fall I have a problem: So many species to fish for, so little time. Trouble is, for the species I enjoy catching the most, these two times are when the fishing peaks. But I often can't fish during these months as much as I'd like to. So during these times I think of solving the problem by creating one species that includes the best qualities of many different fishes–an ultimate gamefish that would be available whenever I am. Here's my choice for the best of the best.

My ultimate gamefish–

- Can be caught as readily as bluegills on their beds in May.
- Tastes as good as walleyes, yellow perch and crappies.
- Grows as long as a river's oldest muskies.
- Grows faster than hybrid stripers.
- Strikes as fiercely as a smallmouth bass clobbers a surface lure.
- Fights as vigorously and as long as American shad.
- Eats as varied a diet as brown trout and smallmouth bass.
- Takes artificials and baits as readily as a famished largemouth.
- Looks as pretty as a wild brook trout, rainbow trout or brown trout.
- Is hardier than carp.
- Lives in places as varied as those where one finds sunfish.
- Reproduces as prolifically as suckers.

Wouldn't it be nice? Dream on, I know, but it's nice to think about. Actually, this exercise backfires on me. Imagining an ultimate gamefish helps me appreciate each species for its own characteristics. It also increases my appreciation of the variety and challenge available in fishing for different species–when they're available. All this makes fishing in the fall even more special.

What would your ultimate gamefish be like?

–Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.

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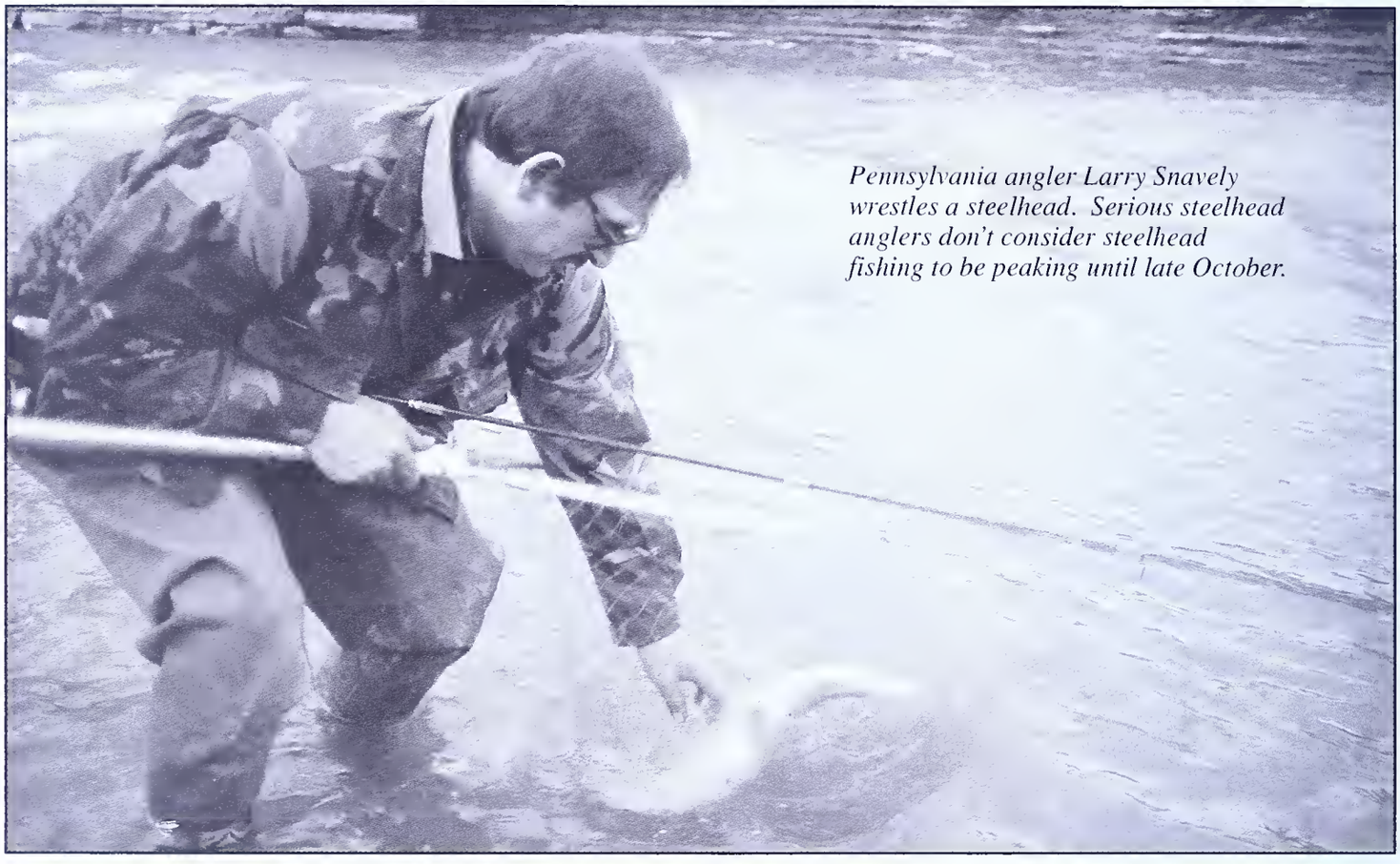
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NORTH COAST *Silver*

BY MIKE BLEECH



Pennsylvania angler Larry Snavely wrestles a steelhead. Serious steelhead anglers don't consider steelhead fishing to be peaking until late October.

photo-Mike Bleech

Steelhead fishing makes true the old adage "10 percent of the fishermen catch 90 percent of the fish." But like most other kinds of fishing, becoming one of the successful minority is not that difficult. So without wasting words–you already know that steelhead are exciting fish–this is a crash course in the basics and some advanced steelhead fishing. Get a handle on this information and you can be a consistently successful steelhead angler.

The basics of steelhead fishing begin with an understanding of the quarry. Historically steelhead are essentially rainbow trout that live part of their lives in the Pacific Ocean and part of their lives in tributary rivers and creeks. They are closely related to Pacific salmon and western trout (not the chars).

Rainbow trout have been present in the Great Lakes since they were first stocked into tributaries. About the same time the Great Lakes salmon boom was gaining momentum around 1970, the steelhead strain of rainbow trout was introduced to the Great Lakes. The earliest Pennsylvania steelhead plant into Lake Erie that I have been able to confirm was 1977, when 39,500 were stocked.

From 1980 through 1991, we stocked about a half-million. In 1992 the stocking was increased to 1,478,080 steelhead, at least partially to offset the declining salmon program. That large plant was responsible for the tremendous steelhead fishing during the 1993-94 fall-winter-spring. Nearly as many have been stocked each year since, so we can expect more outstanding steelhead action in Lake Erie and its tributaries.

From late spring through mid-fall, steelhead tend to be scattered widely in Lake Erie. They are caught regularly by deep-water anglers, but seldom in any quantity. Angling action is best when they return to the tributaries. This gets under way at least by mid-September, but fishing is usually not good or consistent until October. Serious steelhead anglers don't consider steelhead fishing to be peaking until most salmon anglers are off the streams by late October.

Unlike salmon, steelhead return to the tributaries to feed. They follow the salmon to feed on salmon eggs. Steelhead don't spawn until spring, in the streams. Some steelhead follow the salmon into the tributaries in the fall and stay there until spring. Many others don't ascend tributaries until the tributaries swell with spring runoff.

Steelhead do not necessarily die after spawning. Most do not make it past anglers. But some survive to spawn again, so catch-and-release fishing makes a lot of sense.

Timing is the first key to steelhead fishing, first in the long term, then on a short-term basis. The best fishing in the creeks usually occurs while the creeks are rising, until the water becomes so high and muddy it is not fishable, and again when the flow recedes and water clears. By the time the water is so clear you can see most of the bottom with fishing glasses, the best creek fishing has passed. In the lake near the creek mouths good fishing often coincides with good fishing in the creeks. Also, sometimes when the fish should be moving into the creeks but the flow is too low, steelheads stack up near the creek mouths, and fishing there can get hot.

Even though you can enjoy steelhead fishing with the rod and reel outfit you currently own, steelhead fishing is more tackle-intensive than most other Pennsylvania fishing. There are two primary reasons for this. First, steelhead can be very line-shy. Second, steelhead fight very hard, so landing them with light line is difficult. Depending on water clarity, I favor line in the 4-pound-test to 8-pound-test bracket. Typical Pennsylvania steelheads weigh 3 pounds to 8 pounds, and a few top 15 pounds. That's a lot of fish on light line!

Whether fly fishing or spinning, rods should be long and not stiff. The bend of the rod acts as a shock absorber while fighting these great gamefish, cushioning hard turns and taking up slack when the fish runs toward you. My favorite spinning outfit for steelheads is an 8 1/2-foot rod and a light spinning reel, one spool filled with premium 6-pound-test line, another with 4-pound-test line. You should have no trouble finding a proper steelhead rod because many are made expressly for this purpose.

Some other items that come in handy for steelheaders include waders fitted with traction devices, fishing glasses, a landing net and rain gear. You can enjoy some of the finest steelhead fishing while rain is falling. Carry a camera to photograph your catch before releasing the fish.

Your tackle box can be pocket-size. All you need are a few hooks, splitshot and floats. Of course, you can expand on that, which we will explore soon.

Basic terminal rig

The basic terminal rig for steelhead fishing consists of a single hook tied to the end of the line, and a splitshot attached about 10 inches up the line. Bait is usually an egg skein, salmon eggs, trout eggs or sucker eggs.

Simple as this rig is, there are some fine points that many anglers miss. Keep the hook proportionate in size to the bait. Use a wide gap hook because shank has little value in this situation. Use just enough weight to keep the bait close to the bottom. Simplify this by using small splitshot. Then add more or remove some to arrive at the optimum weight. Absolutely do not use any superfluous junk such as a swivel, snap or snelled hook.

There are occasions when other rigging is better, but that is usually in tributaries that are larger than our Pennsylvania Lake Erie tribs.

The basic presentation for this and most other terminal rigs is a natural drift. Cast or flip your bait up-creek. Then let the current carry it by you in a natural manner. If the bait hangs on the bottom, lift the rod tip to keep it moving. If it hangs excessively, use less weight. You will notice during the drift the advantage of a long rod by allowing you to use a minimal amount of line.

To practice the natural drift, do it in clear water so you can actually watch the bait.

You should be a pretty good steelhead angler if you just master what we have already covered. That is basic steelheading. It will get you in the game in almost any creek or river steelheading situation, and even for surf fishing in the lake.

Advanced steelheading

Sometimes, though, it takes a little more to get the interest of steelhead, or a little more can make fishing better. These are advanced steelheading tactics. Most are modifications of the basic terminal rig.

Skein is almost always the best bait. But it is not always readily available. Grubs, nightcrawlers, minnows, commercial putty baits, corn and jar-packed salmon eggs have all caught steelhead. Another option is a fake egg cluster.

Next to real skein I like fake eggs. Scent is the key ingredient to making fake eggs work. Fake eggs also offer the advantage of intensive color. Orange is generally best, but there have also been times when chartreuse, red or amber were better. Sometimes I have more confidence in fake eggs than in the real things. The fakes look, smell, taste and feel real, and they are easier to see.

When the water is fairly uniform in depth, or when snags are a big problem, you might find it easier to fish your bait beneath a float. You might even decide that this rig is more useful than the most basic terminal rig.

The hook and sinker are the same as for the basic rig, except that the splitshot might be a little closer to the bait. Most important about the float is that it is just large enough to keep the splitshot suspended. Check out ice fishing bobbers, or some of the currently popular European-style floats. The top of the float should be some color that is easy to follow because you want to set the hook the instant you detect a take.

The object of the float rig is to keep the bait suspended above the snags, yet deep enough to be seen by steelhead that are very close to the bottom. The closer the bait is to the bottom the better because eye level for most steelhead is within 6 inches of the bottom. Even though the most aggressive steelhead might move several feet to take a bait, you want to be able to catch even the most mildly interested steelhead, so put the bait where they can take it by simply sucking it in without otherwise moving. If you use this line of thinking with all your steelhead fishing, you will be very successful.

Even though the most aggressive steelhead might move several feet to take a bait, you want to be able to catch even the most mildly interested steelhead, so put the bait where they can take it by simply sucking it in without otherwise moving. If you use this line of thinking with all your steelhead fishing, you will be very successful.

NORTH COAST Silver

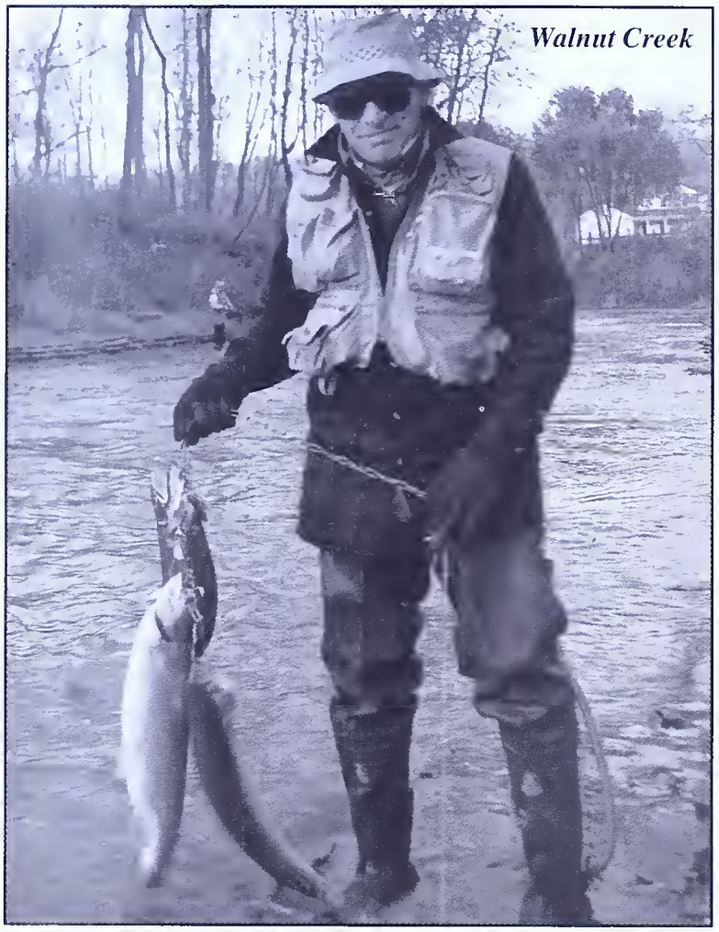


photo-Mike Bleech

Very often, adding some color to egg skein improves results. I am not sure whether color triggers a response, or it is just a matter of visibility, but I suspect the latter. Only chartreuse and bright orange have been productive for me in Pennsylvania creeks, but other anglers have faith in different colors, so I assume that other colors are effective.

There are numerous ways to add color. A single fake egg is popular in the Erie area. Yarn, small spinners, foam and assorted other means are used to add color. Many anglers tie egg sacks using contrasting colored sack material.

Egg sacks are used when the eggs are too ripe to be used as skein. When the eggs ripen to a certain stage the connecting tissue doesn't hold them together. Many anglers fish for salmon for the express purpose of collecting eggs for steelhead fishing. The eggs can be frozen and they will be almost as good as fresh eggs. The eggs can be tied into sacks either before freezing or after they are thawed. If the eggs are not too ripe, freezing won't break down the skein.

Anyone who wants to get past basic steelheading should carry some sort of egg sack construction material. Kits are available that make it easy. One of the most helpful things I have found is string that adheres to itself so that knots are not necessary.

Keep your egg sacks small, roughly the same diameter as your thumbnail.

Small leadhead jigs are quite popular among steelhead followers. Small jigs with one-inch to two-inch bodies on 1/16-ounce or 1/8-ounce heads entice hits from steelhead, especially if some sort of scent is used. The better colors seem to be black, orange and chartreuse. Unfortunately–and it grieves me to write this because I like jig fishing–a large portion of the steelhead caught on jigs are foul-hooked. Poachers like jigs because the steelhead are often foul-hooked under the jaw, which might be interpreted as a fair catch.

Small spoons and spinners sometimes entice steelhead when they show no interest in bait–not often, but sometimes.

Using spoons and spinners in Pennsylvania creeks is about like using bait. Let the current do most of the work. Cast quartering upstream, reel only enough line to keep the lure working and off the bottom. Just keeping slack out of the line might be enough retrieving. At the end of the drift the lure will swing toward a point directly down-current from the rod tip. Many strikes occur during this swing. Let the lure pause briefly at the end of the swing. Then retrieve and start again.

Surf casting in Lake Erie

For some reason I do not understand why Pennsylvania anglers prefer to fish in the creeks instead of in the lake. Surf casting in Lake Erie is a unique opportunity in this state. The relaxing rolling surf alone is enough to make being there worthwhile. But it can also be a great place to fish. If steelhead are moving up the creek you can bet some are near the mouth.

When fishing pressure is heavy in the creeks, and all but the wary fish have been caught, you might find much better fishing at the creek mouths because the fish have not been disturbed. While anglers might be lined up along the creeks near the mouths, very often none is fishing in the lake.

Just because I like to do it, my favorite method of fishing for steelhead in the Lake Erie surf is casting spoons. There is something about casting heavy spoons far out into the lake while standing in the breaking waves that entertains me. Catching fish, of course, is the object, but I can have a fine time when I get skunked. This fishing is usually either feast or famine. Apparently steelhead move to the creek mouths in waves. Some days someone has steelhead hooked nearly all the time. Other days it's just one, or two, or none for everyone who fishes the mouth combined.

In the lake, steelhead generally are more inclined to strike lures that are moving relatively fast. Varying the retrieve, or sweeping the rod during the retrieve often results in strikes.

Bait can be fished from the lake shore using the same basic rigs and float rigs used in creeks. Some anglers bring folding chairs, cast into the lake, prop their rods in a forked stick, and catch steelhead.

If you prefer to fish more aggressively, use the current at creek mouths to drift bait under a float. This method can be effective all through winter in the small patches of open water at the mouths.

Perhaps you have noticed that even the advanced steelhead fishing methods and rigs I have mentioned are all simple. The logic behind this is that complicated rigging makes baits or lures appear unnatural. There are bigger waters and other situations in which more complicated terminal rigging is beneficial, but usually not in the small Pennsylvania tributaries of Lake Erie.

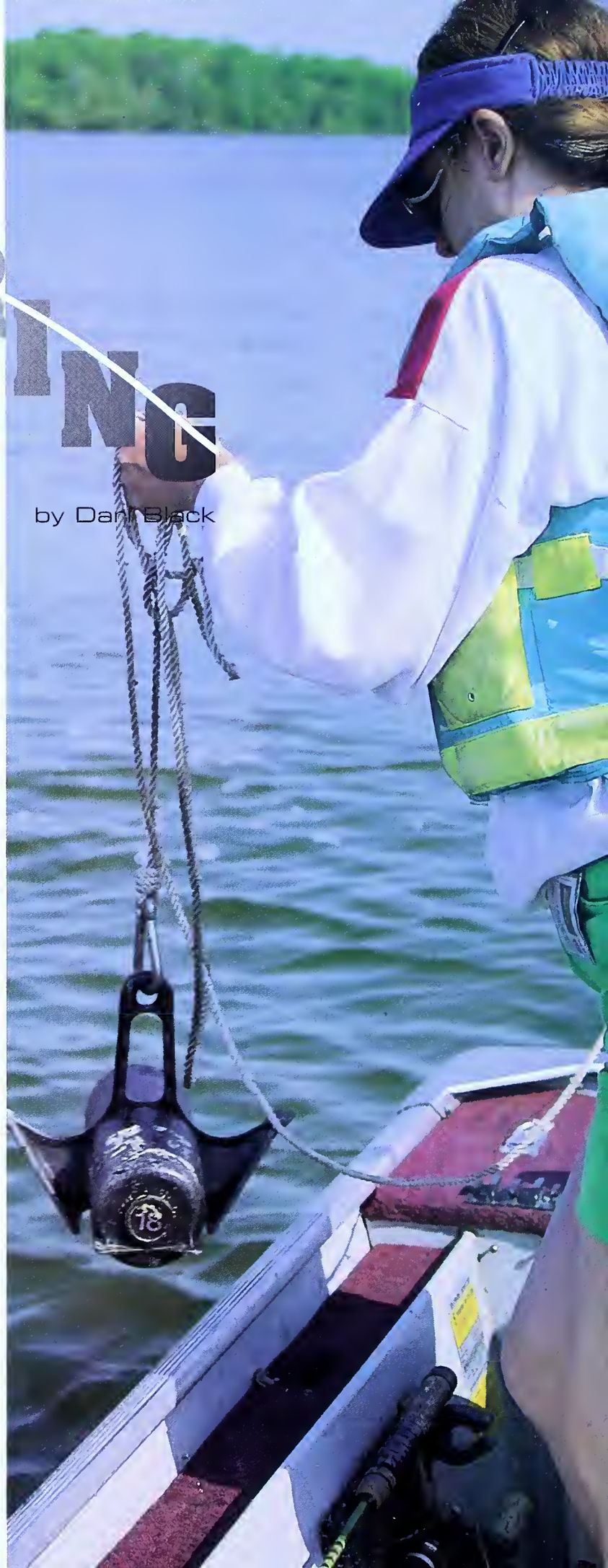
As for the methods like drifting bait, doing it right is tough enough. The next time you visit the steelhead creeks, watch the most productive anglers. You will see that they are not doing anything complicated. They just have the basics mastered.

photo-Mike Bleech


The next time you fish for steelhead, watch the most productive anglers. You will see that they are not doing anything complicated. They just have the basics mastered.

Anchoring for Fishing Success

by Dan Black



Anchoring. It's not something anglers talk about, perhaps because it seems so mundane. After all, as a topic of discussion, it does not excite fishermen. Yet, it is basic to fishing success. With the proper tools, forethought and correct execution, anchoring can result in more fish caught.

Some of you may be thinking: What is there to anchoring a boat? "Just throw the darn thing over the side," said walleye guide Ed Concilla in jest when I asked for his comments on anchoring. Actually, there is much more to consider.

Why anchor?

As a youngster fishing with my father in his 16-foot wooden boat, we either motor-trolled, drifted or anchored. There were no electric positioning motors. Dad always anchored in relatively shallow water protected from the wind. He never explained the reason for anchoring, except to say it "looks like a good place to catch fish." Sometimes it was; sometimes it apparently wasn't. As I look back at it now, anchoring seemed to occur simply as a change of pace, rather than with a specific plan in mind. Anchoring is still viewed that way by many anglers.

But fishermen should not anchor for anchoring's sake. Knowledgeable, successful fishermen identify anchoring as a method of boat control—the most precise method of boat control. If the boat is not positioned properly to allow a lure or live bait to be presented to the desired fish, there is no logic to anchoring.

The collective comments of several expert anglers are distilled in this piece. While each has a slightly different slant to equipment and circumstances for anchoring, all pretty much agree that anchoring is the boat control method of last resort. No one really enjoys the anchoring process. It is troublesome, laborious, time-consuming and

messy. Most would rather use an electric motor to position the boat, set up a controlled drift, or troll. Yet, under certain situations, anchoring is absolutely necessary. Not one of these experts would consider launching a boat for fishing without an anchor and plenty of rope on board.

Anchoring should be undertaken only when there is a reasonable certainty that a school of desired fish is holding within casting distance of a precise spot or are expected to pass through the exact site within a short time. Anchoring is practical for schooled panfish, walleyes, catfish, and in some instances for bass. Anchoring is least effective for solitary species (like large muskies), gamefish schools that forage rapidly through an area or randomly bust the surface (typical of stripers and white bass), or when individual members of a fish species are scattered through shallow cover (common with largemouth bass).

To be successful at anchoring, the angler must know the habits of the targeted fish and be familiar with the lake or river terrain.

"Never anchor at a convenient spot and expect the fish to be there," says walleye expert Jeff Knapp. "Anchoring is not an effective search mode to locate fish-holding areas. You must have expectations of walleyes using the site, either as the result of visible fish marks on the depthfinder or previous catches of 'eyes at the site."

"Years of experience on the river determine exactly where to anchor in the spring, summer, fall and winter for walleyes and smallmouth," says Allegheny River expert Rob Genter of Tidioute. "The fish are not in the same location all the time. To simply go out for the first time, drop an anchor at random and begin fishing is rarely a successful method. You may be lucky once, but do not count on being consistent with random anchoring."

Dave Hornstein, a frequent fishing companion, anchors often. "Many times I am confronted with circumstances that make anchoring the best choice. Often the wind dictates whether I anchor. If I can't hold a position in a breeze with the electric motor, I have no qualms about dropping an anchor—but only if I am on fish.

"During the early spring when Pymatuning walleyes are on shallow humps, I anchor and cast even if the wind is light," says Dave. "Running the electric motor in three feet of water would spook the walleyes. Crappie fishing also lends itself to anchoring when the fish are holding to deepwater brushpiles. The fish are not straying from the cover, and every one of your casts must be on the money. Trying to hover with the electric for an hour on one spot simply does not make sense."

The anchor has finally gained respectability with the bass fishing crowd, too. With the onset of bass tournaments in Pennsylvania back in the late 1970s, "anchoring" became a dirty word for the competitive angler. The fancy bass boat fishing platform could be positioned with powerful electric motors. Most



Dave Hornstein unhooks a nice Lake Erie smallmouth bass. Knowing how and where to anchor precisely can increase your success. Hornstein anchored on structure and waited for smallmouth bass to move through the area. The bass were chasing baitfish.

photos-Darl Black



photos Darl Black

Left, anchor line wrapped onto an electrical cord spool keeps line coiled and neat. Nylon ditty bag, lower right, also makes anchor line storage easy.

figured the anchor was obsolete. For many years, very few tournament anglers carried an anchor. Today that has changed as more and more tournament anglers realize the importance of anchoring under certain circumstances.

Ernie Pate, Jr., a seasoned Pennsylvania tournament angler recognized for finding and catching bass under all kinds of conditions, says, "I anchor anytime I encounter large numbers of bass concentrated on a particular structure, or when I need to carefully strain a deepwater site because I suspect bass are holding somewhere on the structure. I prefer not to anchor, but it is a method to position the boat and something to use when needed. Like many other tools, it is an angling aid that the competitive angler should use."

Over a decade ago when I was fishing bass tournaments regularly, I kept my anchor well-hidden, refusing to use it on competition days. Then at a tournament on Presque Isle Bay, I informed my partner I was ready to open myself to ridicule—we were going to anchor at one spot all day.

Lake Erie lesson

Based on years of experience, I knew smallmouth schools were following emerald shiner schools around the bay. At certain spots—usually a point, hump or inside turn on the breakline—the smallmouth attacked the baitfish schools. Anglers might pull up to a spot in a boat and catch several fish, if the bass were there at the time. However, by constantly changing fishing positions from area to area, it was possible for anglers to be in the right spot at the wrong time all day long. It had happened to me in the past.

We selected one of the right spots and sat there for eight hours. It paid off. There were dry periods without a hit, but several times during the day feeding schools of bass herded baitfish into the inside turn where we sat, and the action would be furious for 10 or 15 minutes. As fate would have it, my partner won the tournament that day by landing a limit of larger smallmouths than I did. Since then, I have not been ashamed to show my anchor.



Using a rope storage system prevents knots and loops in the line, which interfere with deploying an anchor.

Today, I may anchor for bedding bluegills in three feet of water, for summer walleyes on wind-swept humps in 5 to 20 feet, for fall congregations of tightly schooled smallmouths in 40 feet of water, for catfish in the strong current of river pools, or any of a dozen other possible scenarios.

Anchoring system

The basic equipment includes the anchor (or anchors), plenty of rope (at least 200 feet), a method of securing the rope to the boat, and at least one structure marker to use as a reference.

Anchors, both homemade and commercial ones, come in a wide variety of configurations, yet no one type is best for all situations. Anchors may be roughly divided into three different types: ones designed to hold a boat almost strictly by weight; lightweight fluke models designed to hold by digging prongs into the bottom; and ones that use a combination of weight and flukes.

Anglers using a rock, cement block, or commercial mushroom anchor are attempting to hold strictly by weight. One of these anchors may work in shallow water with only a gentle breeze. Unfortunately, that set of circumstances accounts for only a fraction of anchoring situations. To hold in a strong wind requires far more weight than the average angler wants to haul in hand over hand.

The theory behind fluke-type anchors seems logical. When the anchor hits bottom, it tips over on the side and the spikes dig in. Should the anchor become lodged in an obstacle, a sliding ring on the anchor shank allows for a reverse low-angle pull to dislodge it. The digging fluke concept works well on soft bottoms, occasionally on clay, gravel or firm sand, but never on rock.

The navy anchor is a combination of weight and flukes. It's a compromise, so the thick, rounded flukes do not always dig in, nor is the typical 15 to 20 pounds of weight always enough. Still, it is one of the most popular anchors.

All you need to do is quiz anglers on the type of anchor they carry to discover that the ultimate anchor has yet to be invented. I have tested more than six anchors without finding the perfect one.

Hornstein ties two 15-pound mushrooms together, claiming they hold almost anywhere he desires to fish, including swells on the rocky shoals of Lake Erie. But his mushrooms don't always grab quickly enough, and often require resetting. After repeatedly deploying and hauling in 30 pounds of back-breaking anchor, most anglers would begin looking for a different anchor.

For his 14-foot, 10-horsepower rig where equipment weight is an important factor, Pate uses a lightweight fluke-type weighing less than 12 pounds. It's also the same anchor he uses on his 18-foot bass boat. He says he has never found an instance where his anchor will not hold—as long as he has enough rope.

The angle of the line from boat to the deployed anchor is critical to holding ability. Steep line angles are more likely to result in the anchor jarring loose in waves or wakes from other boats. The lower the angle, the better the bottom bite. Low angle is achieved with a long line.

The recommended ratio of line to depth varies depending on wave/wind conditions and bottom composition. The minimum recommended ratio is 3:1, or 30 feet of rope to anchor in 10 feet of water. Granted, on a flat, calm day, it may be possible to anchor in 10 feet of water with 12 feet of anchor rope, but those days are rare.

In rough water and a smooth, hard bottom, the ratio may climb to 7:1 or higher. For example, if anchoring in 35 feet of water, a minimum of 100 feet of anchor rope would be needed in good conditions. You'd need almost 250 feet of rope for a 7:1 rough water ratio. However, if over 200 feet of rope is needed to get a good hold, anchoring as a boat control approach for fishing may be impractical.

"I don't buy into the long-line theory of anchoring," says Knapp. "I want as short a rope as possible to keep the boat from whipping back and forth. That is one reason I have designed and welded my own anchors over the years. The one I am using now incorporates three long flukes with a counterbalance top to be sure it falls over quickly, forcing the flukes to dig in. It's heavy and messy, but works on about 90 percent of the bottoms where I try to anchor."

Concilla, too, fashions his own anchors for 16- and 18-foot aluminum boats on Lake Erie. His device weighs about 20 pounds and features four 15-inch hooks.

If you are not into fabricating your own anchor, Knapp and Concilla recommend the navy anchor as the best all-around commercial device.

Because many anchors are lost in the river, Genter crafts his own anchors. They are basically chunks of scrap metal weighing 30 pounds. They work when he wants the boat stationary.

But when Genter opts for the boat moving slowly with the current, he uses a drag anchor. This is a three-foot length of heavy link chain covered with an old rubber garden hose. It is heavy enough to slow the boat's drift in the current, and almost snag-proof–almost, but not totally. Genter warns of the sudden impact to anglers when the drag anchor unexpectedly hangs on the bottom and stops the boat. Exercise extreme caution if using a drag anchor.

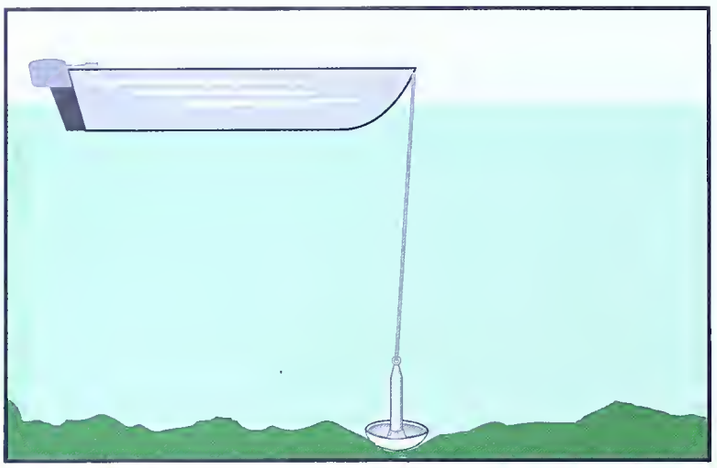
Too often a casual fisherman simply ties the anchor rope to whatever seems convenient, such as a grab rail, seat, or ring on a compartment lid. That could be a bad move. The rising and falling of a boat in waves may damage anything not intended as an anchor tie. If your boat does not have cleats or grippers, install several.

The best position for the rope is the bow eye. This accomplishes two things: It keeps the bow into the wind for safety and keeps the sway or swing of the boat to a minimum. Having the rope coming off left or right of the bow's dead center will alter the boat angle. Use a large marine snap for ease of attachment of the rope to the bow eye. The rope is then secured to an anchor cleat on the bow to prevent additional rope from peeling out. Never anchor with the stern into the wind or current.

To keep a boat perfectly stationary, a second anchor may be deployed off the bow. Many anglers, including me, usually find the second anchor too much additional trouble. However, there are circumstances where it can be very beneficial, especially when dealing with fish holding tight to brushpiles, or when sporadic shifting breezes have the boat spinning in every direction.

But most of the time, anglers can get by with a single anchor. Actually, the swing of the boat can be put to good use, allowing coverage of additional territory. If you have a transom-mounted electric motor, it may be employed to swing in a wide arc while the anchor acts as the pivot point. Particularly in a river current, this tactic enables a lot more area to be covered with lure or bait presentation without actually lifting and repositioning the anchor.

Using an anchor can result in a big mess of muck, weeds and



Too short a line to anchor. Likely to break loose or slide in waves or winds.

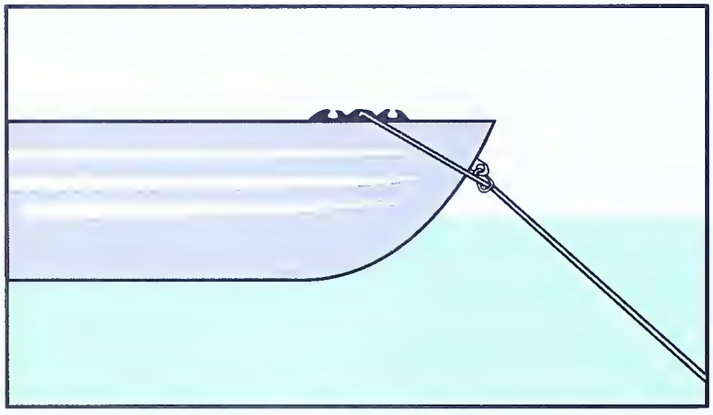
water inside the boat. I use a utility bucket to hold the anchor and rope while moving from one anchoring spot to another. When the anchor is not used, it is stored in a compartment. Leaving rope on the deck is an accident waiting to happen.

The Sunday sailor will carefully and neatly wrap the anchor rope before storing. Anglers have better ways to spend their time on the water than coiling ropes. Besides, the carefully wrapped rope inevitably becomes a tangled mess by the time you need it again. Knapp uses a nylon ditty bag to stuff the anchor rope loosely. As long as the rope cannot shift, it does not tangle. It's the same principle as a rescue throw bag. I store my rope on a revolving spool designed to hold electrical extension cords. You may have another method, as long as it keeps the rope from under foot, but readily available.

A 1/2-inch solid nylon rope is recommended for anchoring large, heavy fiberglass boats. A 3/8-inch rope works for most fishing boats, and even a 1/4-inch rope is enough for lightweight aluminum boats.

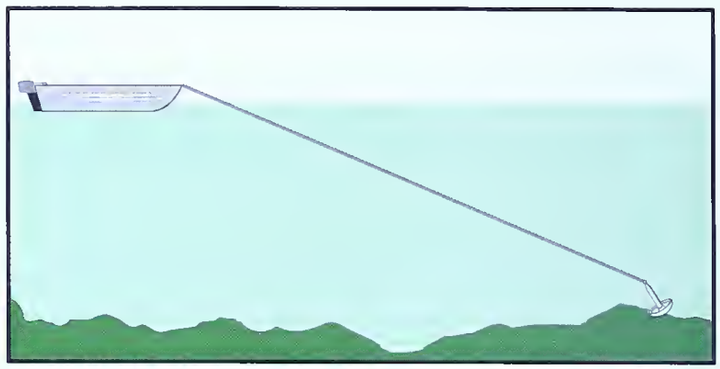
"The anchor rope should be braided line rather than twisted," says Concilla. "Braided line has a lot less stretch. And don't buy that cheap hollow polyester rope and expect it to function as an anchor rope."

Random anchoring is only good exercise. However, thoughtful, properly executed anchoring can help you catch more fish.



Above, use cleat or gripper to secure rope. Use large marine snap to attach sliding anchor rope to bow eye.

At right, use transom electric motor (or gas outboard) to slide left and right in river current to cover more territory without hauling anchor.



Long line to anchor gives better angle for bite. A 3:1 ratio is standard; may be greater.

Deploying the Anchor

How should you go about anchoring? Toss a fisherman's structure marker into the water at the site you desire to fish. Don't drop it right on top of the fish or cover you detect on the sonar unit, but off to one side. This serves as a reference while deploying the anchor.

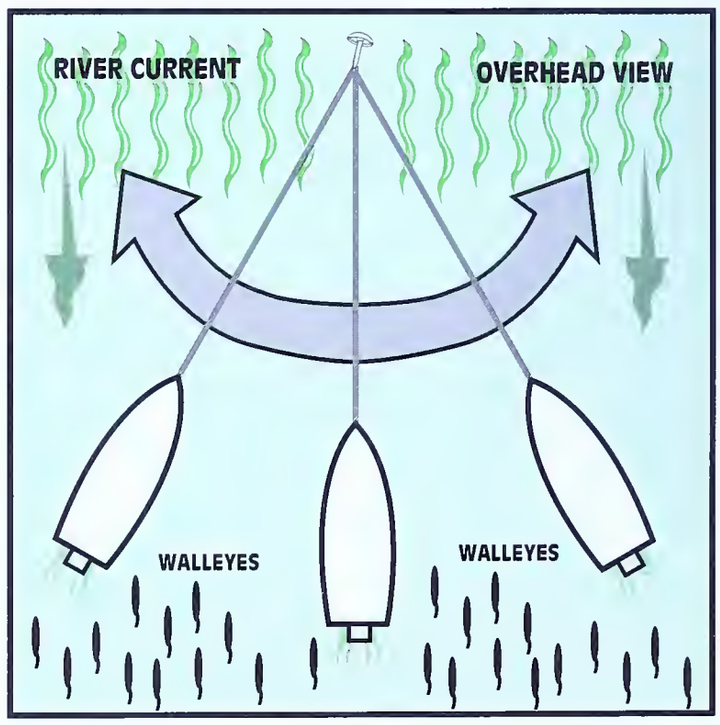
Motor upwind of the marker. This distance must be far enough to allow enough rope for a good bite into the bottom. The distance varies depending on the depth, bottom material and strength of the wind.

Be sure you are not standing on the anchor rope and it is not caught on any equipment. Slowly lower the anchor over the side. Do not toss it.

When the anchor hits the bottom, continue to play out rope, stopping and testing it every few feet to determine if it has grabbed firmly. Once the anchor takes hold, continue feeding line until you are within casting distance of your reference marker.

In strong breezes, keep the boat positioned upwind of the fishing site and cast with the wind blowing from bow to stern.

It's not uncommon to miss the mark on the first try. Perhaps you read the wind wrong and the boat shifts far left or right, perhaps the anchor slipped, or the drop distance was wrong. If the boat is not positioned properly, don't settle for "almost." Pull the anchor and reset it. Keep at it until you get the boat positioned correctly.–*DB*.



The Borcher

by Chauncy K. Lively



When we think of dry fly patterns that represent no specific insect species but seem to be effective in a variety of situations, the Adams generally comes to mind. There's no doubt it's an excellent general-purpose fly, and most fly fishers include it in their fly boxes. But there are other patterns that fit into the general-use category. Some are obscure, and others seem to be well-known only in local areas.

I first learned of the Borcher many years ago on Young Woman's Creek. An angler from Lock Haven showed me the pattern and spoke of it in such glowing terms that I began tying and carrying it myself. I had assumed it was a local pattern, but it was 25 years later when I learned of its true origin. I had traveled to Michigan to fish, and one rainy afternoon I decided to browse a few tackle shops in Grayling. In each I found the fly bins well-stocked with the Borcher in a variety of sizes. In fact, they were probably more plentiful than some of the "standard" patterns. Then I learned it had been developed by the late Ernie Borcher, a well-known Au Sable River guide and fly tier.

The Borcher itself presents a drab, grayish appearance overall–a description applicable to such common mayfly duns as Siphlonurus and Isonychia. In smaller sizes it may also suggest Leptophlebia, Paraleptophlebia and the diminutive Baetis. Small wonder it's a reliable pattern. I've also seen fly fishers use this fly successfully during the Hendrickson hatch. The broad scope of its effectiveness suggests it should be dressed in sizes 12 through 20, any of which can be useful at some time during the season.

The two minor changes I've made in the dressing deal with the tails and hackles. The original dressing called for tails of moose mane hairs, but I have substituted microfibetts, which are considerably more durable. And instead of two dun hackles, I use one dun and one grizzly, mixed. Grizzly hackle produces a speckled effect when wound, and although the effect is subtle, it makes the fly more visible in dim light–a benefit in the smaller sizes. And it doesn't alter the overall hue.

Because we are discussing hackles, I'd like to point to two facets in the hackling of dry flies that are often overlooked. First, standard collar-style hackles (excluding those in long-barbuled spiders, skaters and variants) should have barbules no longer than twice the hook's gape. It's easy to check this before extracting the hackle from the cape by bending back an individual hackle and measuring the barbs against the gape of the hook already secured in the vise. However, in many genetic hackles the barbs are slightly longer toward their tips than the butts, so make your measurement near the hackle's tip.

My second point deals with securing the hackle feathers to the hook. Every dry fly hackle has one side stronger than the other. In addition, many hackles (but not all) have a convex surface opposing one that is concave. In this condition, the convex surface is the shiny side of the hackle and is always the stronger of the two sides. Even if the feather is perfectly flat and lacks the convex/concave aspect, the shiny side is always the stronger. Anyone who has followed these columns in the *Angler* will recall I have for many years advocated attaching the hackles to the hook with the dull sides toward the eye. Thus set, the wound hackles offer superior resistance to air pressure during casting and to surface tension during pickup.

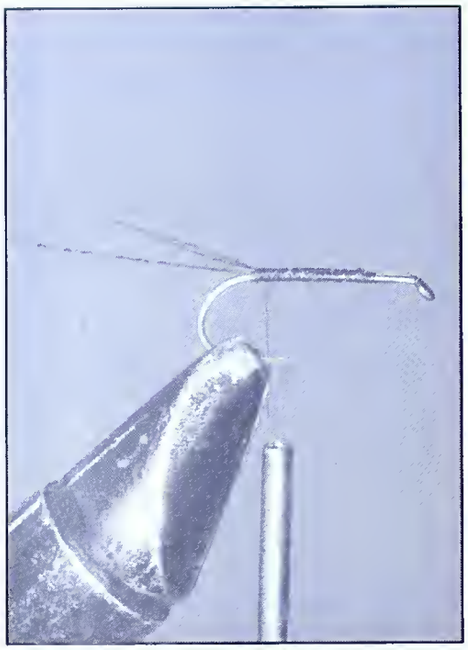
The manner in which the hackles are attached to the hook is important, too. Many tiers hold the hackles together and tie them in with their stems parallel to the shank. Individually, they are then pulled upright to a perpendicular attitude and wound. Often this method is satisfactory, but if a hackle has a brittle stem, it can break or be weakened when drawn vertically. Or if a hackle has a stiff stem, the barbules may twist out of alignment during the first turn.

During my early fly tying years, Paul Young showed me his method of attaching hackles, and it has proven so trouble-free and logical I'm surprised its use is not more widespread. He held the hackles together at right angles to the shank and lashed them securely with figure-8 turns. Then he bent the stem butts forward and bound them under the shank. Dressed in this manner, the hackles are in perfect position for winding and correct alignment of the barbules is assured, without the threat of twisting. Binding the stem butts forward eliminates the possibility of the hackles pulling out–either while they are wound or during the stress of fishing. Sometimes the placement of wings interferes with tying in the hackles perpendicularly, in which case an angle up to 45 degrees is OK.

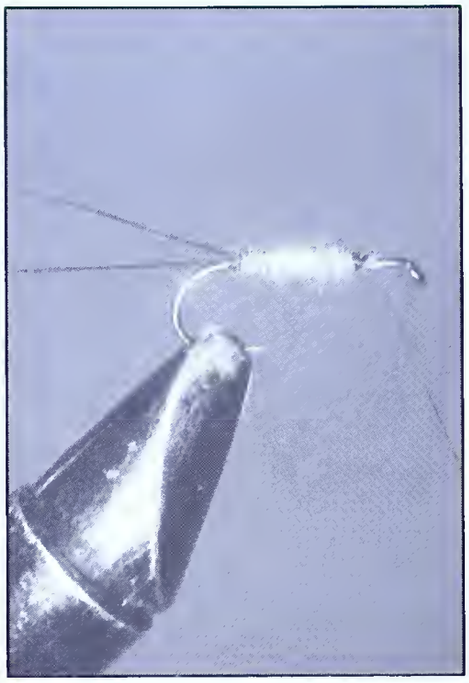
Dressing: Borcher

Hook: Regular shank, dry fly, sizes 12 to 20.
Thread: Black prewaxed, 6/0 or 8/0.
Tails: Four black microfibetts, paired.
Body: Gray muskrat fur dubbing.
Wings: Medium-dun hackle tips.
Hackles: One each, medium-dun and grizzly.

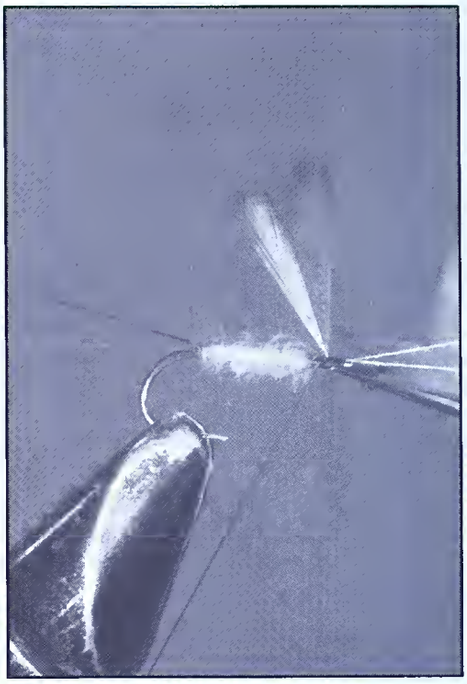
The Borcher



1 Tie in the thread behind the eye, allowing space for the hackle, wings and head, and wind back to the thread. Select four black microfibetts for tails and tie them in at the bend for an effective tail length slightly longer than the overall hook length.



2 Wax about 3 inches of the thread next to the shank and apply muskrat fur dubbing. Wind the dubbing in close turns to form a tapered body.



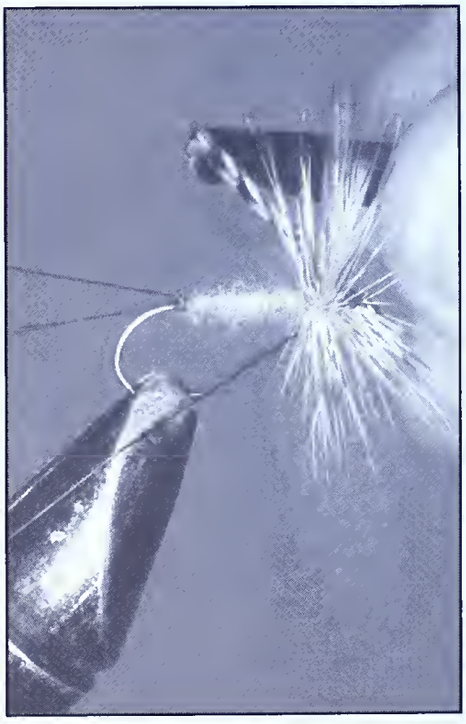
3 Select two matched medium-dun hackles and strip off the lower barbules, leaving tips of about a hook length. Tie in the hackle tips as wings–downwing style–with the butts of the stems extending beyond the eye. Then pull the wings upright, wind behind them to secure and trim the excess stems.



4 Select one each grizzly and medium-dun hackle and tie them in as described in the text.



5 Clamp the hackle pliers to the tip of the front hackle and wind all but one turn behind the wings. Then wind the last turn in front of the wings and tie off with three turns. Trim the excess.



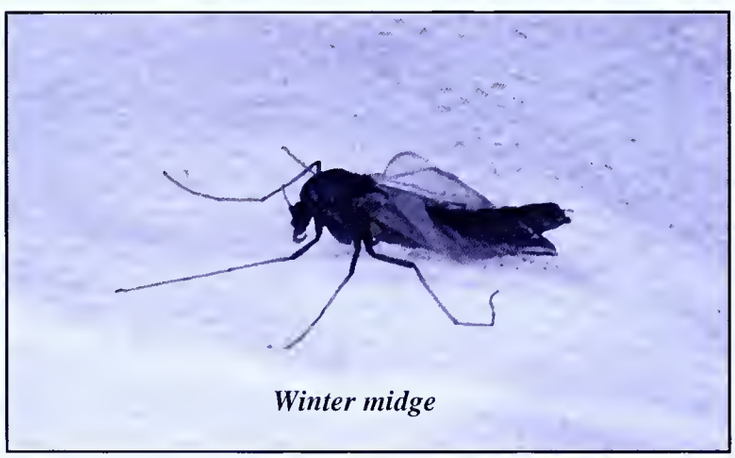
6 Wind the second hackle through the first, make the last turn in front of the wings and tie off. Trim the excess. Use a hackle guard to shield the hackle. Wind the thread to form a head and whip-finish. Lacquering the head completes the Borcher.

Midges

by Charles R. Meck

I hate winter. I detest snowstorms, temperatures below freezing and not being able to get out and enjoy nature. I will never change. Although I've lived my entire life in the Commonwealth, I've never adapted well to the arctic conditions so common the past few winters, especially in central Pennsylvania. I can't stand staying indoors for three or four months tying hundreds of flies and longing for the warmer days of spring and great trout fishing over hatches. Until the past couple of years I depended on hunting to keep me outdoors for a few hours each winter day. But more recently I've extended my fishing days through much of the winter. Here's how it happened.

One day several years ago, when returning from a grouse hunting trip, I walked across a bridge crossing the Little Juniata River. I can't just walk by one of my favorite fly fishing spots without paying homage to it, so I stopped and glanced at the surface for a bit. Fires in fireplaces and running streams mesmerize me, so I continued to stare at the river for several minutes almost in a daze. When I glanced upriver I saw a few dimples on the surface. I looked downriver and saw more dimpling there. I leaned over the railing at the bridge and stared at the disturbances upriver and noted a rhythm to the action. A pod of about a dozen trout fed sluggishly on something on the surface.



Winter midge

I put on my waders that I still had in my car and headed below the bridge to see what attracted these fish to the surface. I didn't have to wait long to see dozens of dark-gray midges emerging just upriver from me. Some of these midges took plenty of time emerging. I watched several escape their pupal shucks. They floated for several feet in the slow water before they wiggled free of the transparent shuck. Trout in what seemed like slow motion methodically rose to take just about every size 24 midge that floated by.

I knew limestone streams like the Fisherman's Paradise section of Spring Creek held midge hatches all winter long, but I hadn't realized that others nearby did also. I vowed to come back the next day to fish over these emerging midges. The next day turned cold and windy and the anticipated hatch of dark-gray midges evolved into a feeble hatch of just a few. A few days later, when the temperature again rose into the mid-to-upper-40s, I again headed to the river to see if the hatch emerged in numbers heavy enough to encourage trout to the surface.

This time I headed for a small side stream that broke away from the main stem. Just before this side stream reentered the main channel, it formed a long, slow pool—an ideal setup for midge-feeding trout. Midge action in November through February usually occurs from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., so I arrived late in the morning waiting to see if the hatch would appear. At first a few dark-gray midges appeared on the surface, but there was no feeding activity from any trout in the area. By noon one small trout took up a feeding position and began capturing sluggish midges. Within minutes a half-dozen others took up feeding positions. I sat back and watched all those trout slowly feed on midges floating over them.

I grabbed a Gray Midge tied on a size 20 short-shank hook and began casting the dry fly over the bottom-most rising trout. I tied the midge on a size 20 short-shank hook because I think I lose too many trout on size 22 or 24 regular hooks. The pattern I selected I had just tied the week before. I stripped a peacock herl from the eye of the peacock and used a grizzly hackle for the legs. I added a piece of white Z-lon about as long as the length of the shank of the hook to the bend where the tail would normally go. Midges have no tail and the Z-lon copies the midge emerging from the pupal shuck. (See the December 1994 *Angler* for an article devoted entirely to shucks.) I'm convinced trout sense the midges vulnerability at this point and often key in on midges with shucks still partially attached. Besides, the shuck gives buoyancy to the pattern because it substitutes for a tail.

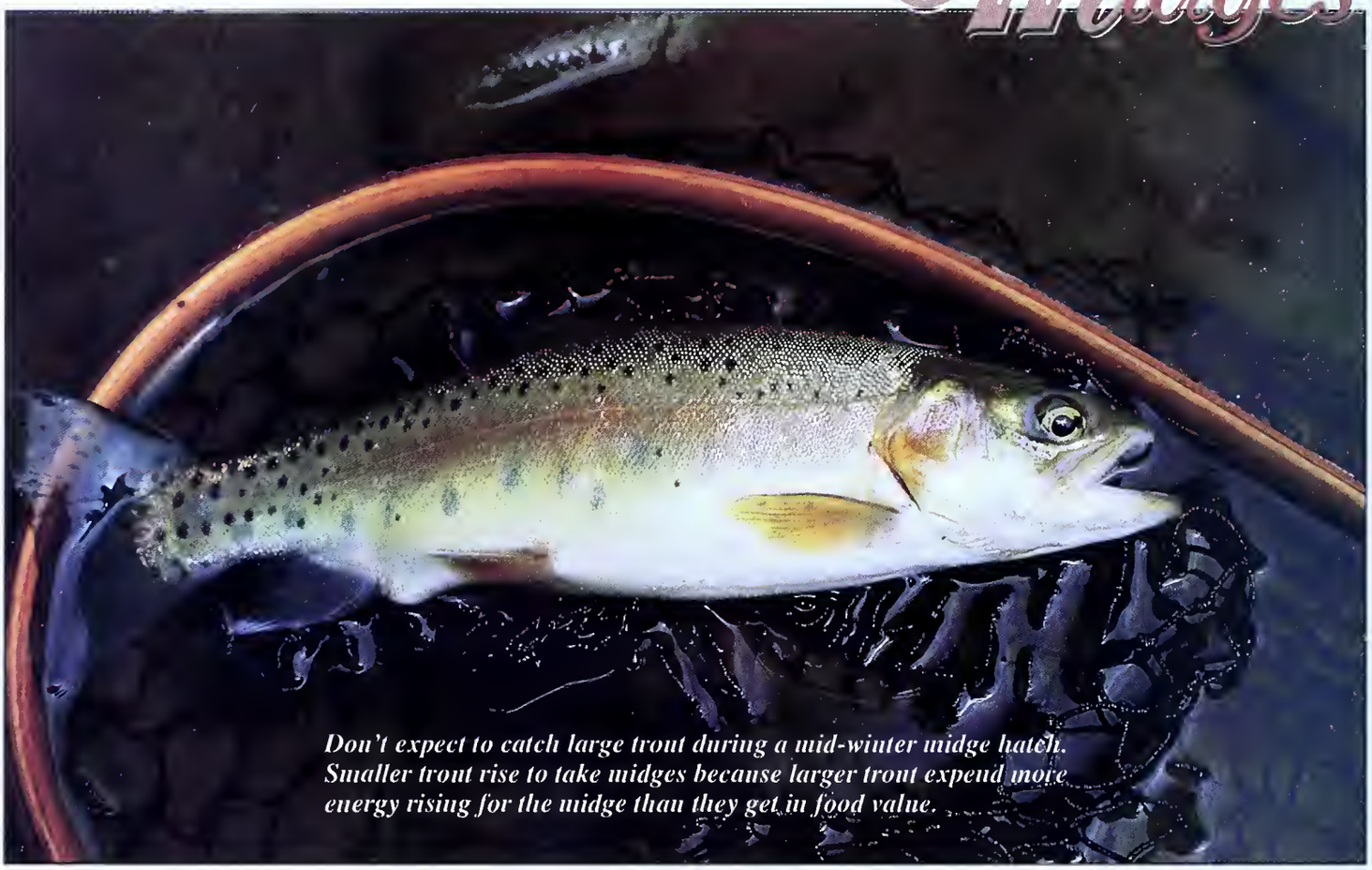
It took seven or eight good casts over that lowest trout before it came up slowly and took the pattern. I set the hook and landed a seven-inch brown trout. Just this past June that fish had been stocked as a fingerling.

I now worked on the next fish upriver in this slow pool. After 10 or 12 floats over this trout it took the size 20 pattern gently. I released this seven-inch trout and worked on the next one upstream. The action continued for more than two hours or until about 2:00 p.m. when the midge hatch intensity diminished. The trout in the tail of this pool quit when the hatch waned.

No, these trout didn't eagerly take the pattern—most times it required a half-dozen perfect floats over the trout before they took the midge artificial. When you fish over trout rising to a midge hatch, make certain you use a long, fine tippet to give

photo-Charles R. Meck

Midges



Don't expect to catch large trout during a mid-winter midge hatch. Smaller trout rise to take midges because larger trout expend more energy rising for the midge than they get in food value.

you a drag-free float. And as George Harvey always says, "make certain you use a slack-leader cast." By stopping your rod short on your final cast and bringing the rod down by your side, you automatically make a series of S-curves in your leader. These S-curves help the pattern drift drag-free for a longer float. Some anglers believe that they should make these curves in their line rather than their leader—this doesn't work. When I'm fishing midge dry flies in the winter, I usually tie on a two- to three-foot 5X tippet to help the fly float drag-free. With the long, fine tippet and the S-curves you should be able to cope with the high selectivity of midge-feeding trout.

But sometimes trout refuse taking the dry fly. Trout often feed on the emerging pupa just under the surface. Sometimes we mistake trout taking the pupa just under the surface as a rise to a midge on the surface. To cope with these types of rises I borrowed a highly productive pattern used on lakes and rivers throughout the state of Washington. Garry Sandstrom of Tacoma, Washington first showed me this sinking pattern on Rocky Ford Creek and Nunally Lake during a midge hatch. I tied some of the patterns for Pennsylvania streams and found them as productive here as out West. I tie the midge pupa with a body of black, gray or olive antron and rib it with fine copper wire. I then dub in some black angora and tie it in generously as a thorax. I add a short piece of white poly yarn and tie it just in front of the thorax like the wing of a spinner, but much shorter. I take some additional dubbed black angora, bring it over the wings and finish off the head with the remaining dubbed material. To help make the pattern sink better I usually wrap about eight to 10 turns of .015 wire around the shank. I then place the midge pupa behind a larger dry fly like an attractor pattern. I tie the pupa to the dry fly with an improved clinch knot at the bend of the hook of the dry fly. By varying the distance between the dry fly and the sinking midge pupa you can vary how deep the pupal pattern sinks.

Check stream regulations to make certain you can use more than one fly. For example, on the Little Lehigh and Fisherman's Paradise section of Spring Creek, you are limited to one fly.

I tried the pupal pattern recently on central Pennsylvania's Spring Creek during a midge hatch in late November. On the far shore from where I fished, a mile below Fisherman's Paradise, trout constantly rise on warm late-fall and winter afternoons. I cast the midge pupal pattern over what I thought were risers and caught three of these fish one afternoon. That might not seem like a lot of success, but remember these trout see thousands of patterns a year and become highly selective to the point of being frustrating. Try this innovative pattern from the West next time you encounter a midge hatch.

Not all midge hatches produce rising trout. I spent several days on the lower Bald Eagle on several occasions from November to March. One day I made my way to the stream through 30 inches of snow. I had to park about a half-mile from the stream and wade along the stream to my final destination. Midges emerged by the thousands all afternoon long, but not one trout rose. Sure, this stream holds trout during the winter, but not in great numbers. The trout it does hold range from 12 to 18 inches long—not the size you often see rising to a size 24 hatch. When selecting a place to fish over rising trout for the midge hatch, try to select one that has a good number of trout. If you know a stream with a delayed-harvest section and a good midge hatch, you're set for some good matching the hatch fun.

As I said earlier, don't expect to catch large trout during a mid-winter midge hatch. It's been my experience that smaller trout rise to capture midges. Larger trout expend more energy in rising for the midge than they get in food value.

photo-Charles R. Meck



Dark-Gray Midge dry fly with attached Z-lon shuck.

Anglers seem surprised when they find out that many Commonwealth streams have hatches from April through September. Many seem to think that most mayfly hatches appear near the end of May. Tell them that they can expect to see a little blue-winged olive hatch in October or March and they really become surprised. But ask many anglers if anything emerges from November through February and most say no. Yet dozens of Pennsylvania streams harbor emerging insects throughout the winter months, especially hatches of stoneflies and midges. Pick out a stream like Spring, the lower Bald Eagle, the Little Juniata River, and dozens of other limestone streams scattered throughout the state like the Little Lehigh near Allentown and you can find midges appearing almost daily throughout the winter.

Just this past year, after 100 inches of snowfall in the region, I had to get out of the house for awhile. During a brief respite between snowstorms in late February I headed for the lower Bald Eagle below Milesburg. During that afternoon I saw thousands of midges emerging along with hundreds of black stoneflies. During the entire afternoon I never saw one trout emerge for one of these insects. I feel certain the few trout remaining in the stream over the winter fed underneath.

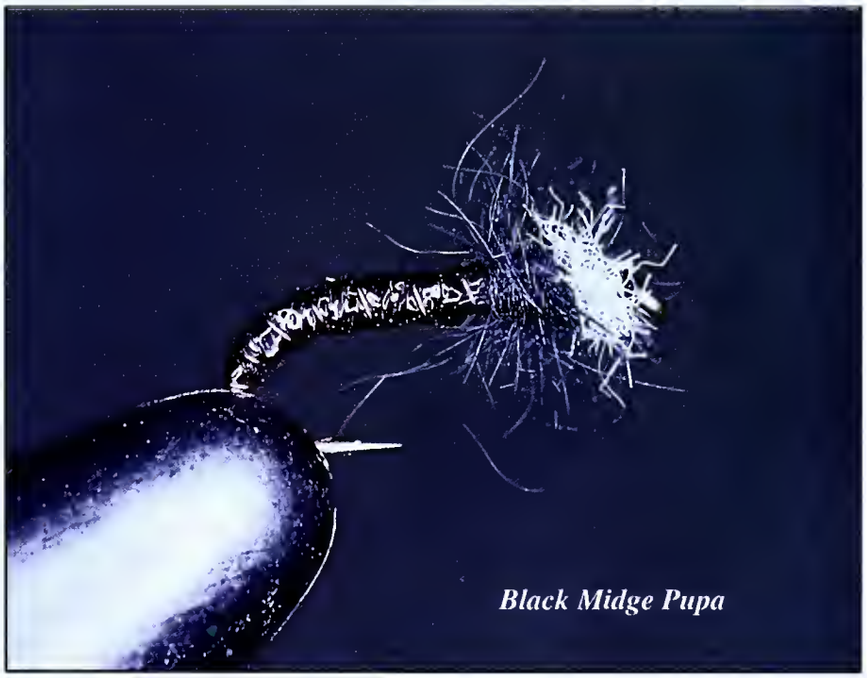
Tailwaters like the Youghiogheny River in southwestern Pennsylvania and the Tulpehocken in the southeastern part of the state hold many midge hatches.

If you find a stream that holds a good midge hatch, you can expect these small insects to appear for three to four months during the winter. Spend some time checking the stream for rising trout. Usually you'll find trout rising in the same location every day the midges emerge. Look for trout at the tail of a pool. If you find one trout rising, you'll probably find more. Trout often rise in pods of a half-dozen to a dozen when midges appear. Midges in colors from cream to olive hatch throughout the 12 months of the year. I've encountered great cream midges in the fall, so be prepared for this small hatch, too.

If you plan to fish a midge hatch, arrive by noon and fish until 3:00 p.m. Hatches seem heavier and trout more respondent if you hit one of those late-fall or winter days where air temperatures rise near 50 degrees. Carry some black downwing patterns with you on those trips, especially if you're fishing a midge hatch in winter. I've often met black stonefly hatches in sizes 14 and 16 on January, February and March fishing trips. These stoneflies seem to emerge in the middle of the stream and slowly flutter their way to shore where you'll often find them and dark midges walking on ice or snow near the shore. If you find a stream that holds a good population of trout, you'll do well with black stonefly imitations during midwinter.

Do you detest the winter months as much as I do? Do you long for those first days of spring when you can match great hatches like the blue quill, hendrickson and quill gordon? Do you look forward to seeing trout rising and water temperatures in the 50s and 60s? It's now November, December or January, and you've already had it with staying indoors. Why not try to locate some streams nearby your home that hold midge hatches all winter long?

If you have a productive limestone stream close at hand, check that water carefully in the early afternoon for these diminutive hatches. If you have a tailwater nearby, check that for hatches.



Black Midge Pupa

Once you've located some midges emerging, search the stream for rising trout. Look for these trout in slower sections of the stream where they don't have to expend much energy in rising to the midge hatch.

Once you've located risers you'll probably see pods of a half-dozen to a dozen taking winter midges. Before you fish the hatch, tie up some of the dark-gray midge dry fly patterns with shucks and some of the emerging midge pupa patterns. Make certain you have a long tippet and that you stop your cast short and you get plenty of S-curves. Now you're ready to get rid of the winter blues and experience some winter fishing in Pennsylvania. Look for a fairly comfortable afternoon with temperatures rising near 50 degrees and get out, forget about the weather and enjoy dry fly fishing over those winter midge hatches. And if the midge hatch fails to appear or the trout don't cooperate, you've still gained one important accomplishment—you've enjoyed a day in the outdoors during the winter.

photos-Charles R. Meck

Questions of ETHICS

by Richard Tate



photo-Joe Workosky

The big fish: I had nearly reached the upper end of the public access trout water when I spotted him: A huge brown trout in the two-foot category. I had sought such a trout for many years but had never landed one. Only five feet above the trout's lie was a private fishing club's wire with its glaring orange "POSTED" signs. The fish was obviously one of the club's oversized stocked trout. The club had, no doubt, paid big bucks for this lunker trout, which was quite valuable to the members. He would probably run upstream into the club's water even if I did hook him. Still, he was out in the public domain, and I could legitimately try to catch him. But should I fish for him?

The invitation: "Rich, would you like to visit our club to fish?" asked the fly-fishing club member. "We've got a lot of nice trout, and you are almost certain to catch one or two trout over 18 inches. The sulphurs are on, too. You won't have to worry about being crowded out of a section of stream as you do on public water. You'll be given a beat and will have it to yourself for the evening. All that we ask is that you release all the trout you catch and donate $10 to our trout-acquisition fund."

The invitation was extended in a sincere, friendly manner. The man was offering me a special evening of fine fishing for large trout. However, I am an advocate of public-access trout fishing, though I sometimes fish water that has been posted by an individual if I am allowed. These areas have often been posted because of thoughtless actions of visitors or to protect wild trout from overharvest. However, I once belonged to a private club for a couple of years, and I came to be philosophically opposed to fishing at private clubs for a variety of reasons. Still, the man's offer was enticing, and it would be neat to catch a lot of big trout on little dry flies.

A writer's dilemma: As a member of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association (POWA), I must write a certain number of articles each year to maintain my active membership. However, I am busy with a full-time job that leaves only a little time for writing. I could, however, easily fill my quota by writing articles about various creeks and rivers. This kind of article sells relatively easily. However, do I have the right to urge large numbers of anglers to descend on pastoral Keystone State rivers and creeks, many of which are on private property? Do I have the right to tell the public that certain private waters are super "honey holes"?

The arrival of the white truck: Here I was, enjoying an afternoon of fishing on a weekday, a rare but special spring treat for me. I was fishing upstream along a wooded area near a bridge, when I noticed a commotion at the bridge. "They're stocking today," I thought to myself, as I saw a large white truck and a few guys pouring bucketfuls of fish into the pool at the bridge. After depositing the trout, the truck and the men quickly drove off. There were no anglers following the truck, either. I could approach the pool, put on a pair of nymphs, and quickly dredge up a bunch of trout. It would be a cinch. However, would it be sporting to fish over these unwary, disoriented trout? Other guys would just catch them and kill them later, anyway.

A small, beautiful brook trout: One lovely early June afternoon I was fishing a freestone stream that tumbles out of the picturesque northcentral Pennsylvania mountains. It has not been stocked for quite a few years now, and the section I was fishing was a specially regulated delayed-harvest area. It was only a couple of days before being legally permitted to kill a few trout, though I had no such intention. I had made the two-

How should another angler be approached on a waterway–should you speak to him or give him a wide berth? Should anglers participate in tournaments? Is it necessary to be a total catch-and-release angler?

hour drive to this wonderful creek to soak in the power and beauty of the mountains and to catch, admire, and then release its gorgeous wild brook and brown trout. I was enjoying a good afternoon of fishing, having caught and released a number of the stream's beautiful trout. I eventually arrived at a long, flat pool where I often manage to catch a larger-than-average trout. My first cast was rewarded with a splashy rise to my jaunty Adams. I set the hook, and I found myself attached to a brook trout of slightly less than nine inches. Unfortunately, I saw that the trout was bleeding profusely from being deeply hooked in his gill area. However, I could not legally creel the fish, even though he seemed doomed to die. I could easily "boot" him, and no one would know. I have never seen a WCO on this creek. I would probably not encounter another angler, and if I keep the trout, he would not be wasted. What should I do?

Most of the time fishing is a natural act. We anglers go fishing, catch a few fish, and don't have to think about serious ethical questions. Sometimes, however, we do have to make decisions about what we think is right or wrong regarding our fishing. In each of the situations above, I had to make such a choice. As Richard A. Snyder, Chief of the Commission Division of Fisheries Management, noted in a conversation, fishing ethics "goes into one's own philosophy. It actually reflects one's own view of life." My decisions are reflections of my philosophy. They might be different from the decisions you make.

The first situation did not present an especially difficult decision for me, though I knew the trout had been bought by the fishing club's members. The trout was in open water where I had every right to fish for him, and I did, reminding myself that the club's members often fished on public water outside of their preserve. That I hooked the big trout, that he ran upstream into the club's property, and that he broke me off in no way causes me to regret my decision to try to catch him. Though it was a number of years before I finally did catch a two-foot brown trout (which turned out to be a large stocked trout), it would have been thrilling to have landed this big trout.

Of the situations I have noted, my decision about the invitation to fish the private club was the one where my fishing philosophy may have met its most interesting test. Being philosophically opposed to private club fishing, it was crucial that I be consistent and decline the invitation. I did just that, trying not to hurt the man's feelings, but trying not to be a hypocrite, either. Although I crave solitude when astream and I really enjoy catching large trout, I prefer to find them along public access trout streams where the "average Joe" is permitted to wet a line.

And what of the ethics of what is known as "kiss-and-tell" writing? What do I do? I certainly do not want to lose my status as an active member of POWA. Even though I have penned a few such "where-to" stories and do not see too much wrong with writing about large waters that can take a lot of pressure, I have chosen to write very few such pieces. Articles about small, public access streams could do a lot of damage to these creeks. I have seen it happen. I have seen uncrowded streams become virtually polluted with fishermen after one of these pieces. This frequently results in overharvest of the stream's fish. In addition, I know a couple of friendly landowners who posted their properties after one of these articles appeared. Even worse than this, in my opinion, are the articles about posted, private waters that sound as though these streams are open to the public. I have seen several such articles, a couple about famous Spruce Creek, which is nearly all locked up. I have decided that it is not ethical for me to write articles about most private waters. I also believe that it is reprehensible for any author to imply that private waters are open to public fishing. This is a disservice to the public and to their editors in the interest of making a quick buck.

About fishing for freshly stocked trout: I have actually encountered this situation twice where I have had a group of newly planted trout to myself, once when I was in my late teens, and once as an adult. As a teen, I went right after the fish, quickly catching and creeling a limit. However, as an adult, I have tried to adapt the fair-chase ethic to my angling. Fishing over a pod of 40 or 50 gullible fish wouldn't exactly be a "fair chase." At the bridge I had to make a decision. No one else would know that I had hounded the freshly stocked trout. So what did I do? I bypassed the pool at the bridge and fished my way upstream to where I had parked earlier. Though I think it would have been fun to catch one trout after another, I was proud of myself for not taking unfair advantage of what had been a very tempting situation.

Finally, what did I do about the injured brook trout in the delayed-harvest stream section? This was, of the above-mentioned situations, the most serious ethical dilemma for me. There was almost no doubt that the pretty little fish was going to die. It was bleeding badly from its gill area, and everything I have read about the survival of released trout over the years has indicated that a trout bleeding from this area is doomed to die, that it should be creeled so that it is not wasted. However, it was illegal for me to keep the trout on two counts: The legal harvest time of fish from the stream was not yet open, and even if it were, the fish did not quite reach the nine-inch minimum size for harvest. I did not want to break the law. I did not want to put the doomed fish back into the stream, either. What would you have done?

After agonizing over my choices, I finally decided to obey the law, to release the bleeding trout. I cut the tippet, leaving the fly in the fish, hoping it would somehow survive, though doubting it. That the small brook trout did slowly swim out into the pool did not much assuage my guilt-ridden conscience.

There are quite a few ethical problems for anglers to consider about their sport. Should they participate in angling tournaments? Is it necessary to be a total catch-and-release angler as I try to be? How should another angler be approached on the river–should you speak to him or give him a wide berth? Thankfully these questions of right and wrong do not present themselves too regularly. However, when they do occur, as an angler striving to be ethical, I try to be prepared to deal with them as swiftly and as decisively as I can.

Where to Find WINTER WALLEYE *ACTION*

by Mike Bleech

Walleyes might well be the most desirable fish among Pennsylvania anglers if more anglers were acquainted with them. Almost everywhere they are abundant they are number one. Though not flashy fighters, they are respectable on the hook. Fishing for them is fun and challenging. They get big. They tend to be abundant. Then perhaps their most attractive feature is on the dinner table. Walleyes are rated by many people as the best-tasting fish in freshwater or saltwater.

Another thing walleyes have going for them is that they are active when most other gamefish are difficult to catch–during winter. In fact, walleyes are easier to catch during winter than they are during summer, and the average size tends to be bigger. They can also be caught without resorting to ice fishing. You can cast to walleyes in open water all through the winter, right to the end of walleye season.

Walleyes are active all through winter. Their food supply is relatively low, though. Even though they probably do not need to eat nearly as much as they must eat in warmer water, they have to be in a receptive mood at least as long. They can not be as choosey as they might be when food is more abundant, during summer.

I had been fishing for 20 years before becoming a serious winter walleye angler, but when the bug bit me, it bit hard. For the past couple of decades I have spent far too much time at winter walleye fishing. I am sure that results had a lot to do with it. Also, I enjoy the intense concentration necessary in this sport. I enjoy the fishing methods. I enjoy the company of serious winter walleye anglers, though this is not a gregarious sport.

But I am not trying to convince anyone to become a winter walleye angler. I am just telling what it is about. In addition to the nice things, it is about fishing in such low temperatures that your fingers sometimes fail to function. It is about standing alone on a river bank for hours in the darkness. Often it involves standing in frigid water.

Now if that sounds like fun to you, here is more.

The relationship of current and structure becomes a key in locating walleyes in larger river pools. Humps of one sort or another seem to be the most common structures, call them sunken islands, bars, reefs, points or simply humps. Irregularities in long dropoffs are often great.

Open-water walleyes

Good winter walleye fishing can be found close enough for most Pennsylvania anglers to make one-day fishing visits. Mainly it is along our larger rivers. Large portions of these rivers sometimes get locked in ice, yet there is always some open water with respectable walleye fishing potential in the state.

Along the northeastern border, the Delaware River has long harbored some big walleyes, and more recently stocking has increased the overall population. Most of the better fishing is along Pike County and through the Delaware Water Gap. You might find some good fishing farther upriver in larger pools.

The tailraces of Blue Marsh Lake and Nockamixon Lake provide winter walleye fishing in the southeast corner. Fish close to the dam in both cases, and be prepared for plenty of company. Last winter walleyes in the 21- to 22-inch class were abundant at Blue Marsh, in Berks County. At Nockamixon, in northern Bucks County, the size is also good, but they are not as plentiful.

The great Susquehanna River has good winter walleye fishing scattered

practically from our northern border to our southern border. Through Bradford and Wyoming counties the deeper pools are the honey holes. To the south, look for walleyes in the warmwater discharge from the Brunner Island Power Plant, near Saginaw, or the tailrace of York Haven Dam, at Falmouth. Learn to read the water and you can find them in plenty of other places.

Draining the northcentral Allegheny Highlands, the West Branch Susquehanna River might be regarded as a comer in walleye fishing. The best action is downriver from Loyalsock Creek.

Cutting through the southcentral mountains, the Juniata River offers numerous hotspots all the way upriver through Huntingdon and into its branches.

Probably best of all the rivers is the Allegheny, from the Kinzua Dam tailwater in Warren County right to Pittsburgh. The Kinzua Dam tailwater is one of the best places, giving up 12- to 15-pound walleyes every winter. Walleyes are in the pools through Warren, Forest and Venango counties. The dredged pool at Tionesta is excellent. Farther downriver they are caught below the navigation dams and at the mouths of larger tributaries. Lock and Dam #2 might be the best place in the navigation system.

The mighty Ohio River also has good walleye fishing below its navigation dams. Dashields Lock and Dam stands out.

French Creek, which flows through Erie, Crawford and Venango counties before dumping into the Allegheny River at Franklin, is also noteworthy because it holds some exceptionally big walleyes. The mouth of Cussewago Creek is a popular spot.

Zeroing in

Getting in the right general area is far from enough location information for winter walleye fishing. Unlike spring or fall when walleyes tend to move long distances in rivers, they are more inclined to be homebodies during winter. Movements tend to be short and within the confines of one pool. The area where they are likely to be caught is a factor of their abundance. For the most part, winter walleye anglers think in terms of pinpointing the walleyes.

Always the most important factor in locating active walleyes is food sources. No food, no active walleyes, at least not in the long run. Walleyes might be feeding on any of numerous kinds of minnows and other small fish, or they might be concentrating on insect larvae.

In small tailwaters like Blue Marsh, walleyes are usually very close to the dam, just around the fringes of the discharge plume. Very often they are right under the discharge plume. This contrasts with the otherwise usual slow-water winter pattern, so understand from the start that walleyes are wherever they are regardless of rules conjured by anglers.

The only water deep enough to hold walleyes below some of our smaller dams is in the immediate tailwaters. As a general rule, do not expect to find walleyes holding for any length of time in water where you can see bottom.

Larger tailwaters, at the Kinzua Dam, for example, are practically the same situation, except that the plume is so large you should recognize specific hotspots within the plume. When fishing is hot, walleyes might be active all around the plume. More often, though, a current break, a dropoff, or a backwater might be the only place to find active walleyes. More important than knowing any one location pattern is knowing that such places might exist.

Though walleyes might not be abundant on an overall basis, winter fishing can be excellent in creeks such as French Creek because there is not a lot of good walleye habitat. All of the walleyes will be concentrated in a few small pools.

The secret is out about French Creek because it produced a walleye weighing more than 15 pounds a few years ago, and

it has been written about many times. But several other creeks might be just as good.

One of the best ways to locate winter walleye hotspots is to float the creeks during warmer weather. During summer when the water is low you might have to drag your boat or canoe over shallow riffles, but this is when the deeper pools are most evident, and when you can get the best idea about the shape of the pools. Plot them on a map, and draw diagrams of each likely pool for reference during winter.

One of the major problems with fishing creeks is access. Most of the land surrounding creeks is privately owned, and floating them is sometimes difficult during winter. Once you find pools you want to fish during winter, start trying to get permission to cross the land. Then maintain access privileges by respecting the land, and perhaps dropping a few walleye fillets off with the landowner.

The relationship of current and structure becomes a key element in locating walleyes in larger river pools. Humps of one sort or another seem to be the most common structures, call them sunken islands, bars, reefs, points or simply humps. Irregularities in long dropoffs are often great.

Probably the most versatile locator winter walleye fishing rig is the jig-and-minnow combo. It is easy to rig and offers both natural look and smell with color attraction.

Confounding location theories, walleyes might roam in large pools during winter as they might during summer, so the only way to find them is either to spot them using sonar or fish for them.

Locator fishing methods

Even on the larger river pools where you can fish for winter walleyes from a boat, sonar is limited in its value for locating walleyes. It can be helpful in locating structure, and sometimes it spots baitfish. But walleyes usually hug the bottom so tightly that they are difficult or impossible to distinguish from the bottom. Usually, either fishing from shore or from a boat, the final step in locating walleyes is to fish for them. So it is beneficial to use fishing methods that are fast enough to cover the water quickly yet slow enough to appeal to walleyes in cold water.

Probably the most versatile locator winter walleye fishing rig is the jig-and-minnow combo. It is easy to rig and offers both natural look and smell with color attraction.

You should be able to handle most winter walleye fishing situations with either 1/8-ounce, 1/4-ounce or 3/8-ounce leadheads. You can keep the rigs inexpensive and simple by using bare leadheads and minnows, or you can dress the leadheads with plastic or bucktail, or add a trailer hook. In any case, hook the minnows upward through both lips.

Despite being called a jig, do not jig the jig-and-minnow when fishing for walleyes during winter. Instead, swim the rig very close to the bottom, or crawl it along the bottom. It can be cast and retrieved, trolled, drifted from a boat, or drifted in a current.

Where to Find WINTER WALLEYE *ACTION*

The important points of this method are first to keep the bait close to the bottom–in most cases–and second to move it slowly. Using a light head is one way to make sure you fish it slowly.

Sometimes it takes a bit more to turn on walleyes. One of the better ways to search for and catch walleyes while fishing from a boat in large river pools is vertical jigging while drifting. Jigging spoons such as the Swedish Pimple, Hopkins spoon and Kastmaster, and swimming jigs such as the Rapala Jig or Airplane Jig, accomplish this method. Either of these types can be tipped with a small minnow or a piece of a minnow for added attraction.

Vertical jigging is effective only when the lure can be kept nearly vertical. That is, if the lure trails far behind the boat, either switch to a heavier vertical jig or try a different method.

Vertical jigging in winter is a delicate sort of jigging. Lift the lure just a few inches or limit movements to a wiggle. Let the lure be motionless for several seconds at a time. It is sort of like teasing a cat.

The best method I have found for catching walleyes around the discharge plumes of dams is stringing minnows. The strung minnow rig places the hook at the rear-central part of the minnow, where it will be inside a walleye's mouth virtually every time a walleye grabs the minnow. This is a huge advantage in stiff current, where you can't allow a walleye time to run with the bait. You can sink the hook the instant you feel a pick-up.

The strung minnow rig uses a bait needle to thread a loop in the end of the line into the mouth of a minnow and out the vent. A treble hook is attached to the loop, and the line is snugged. Insert one barb of the treble hook into the minnow when you snug the line. The amount and type of weight used with this rig depends on the current and water depth. At the Kinzua Dam tailwaters we often use a 3/4-ounce egg sinker held away from the bait by tying a barrel swivel into the line. Just a splitshot or two is enough at some of the smaller dams.

Wintertime walleye fishing is a mystery only because many anglers are reluctant to try cold-weather fishing. If the weather does not bother you, the fun is just beginning.

Pennsylvania ANGLER

Winter Walleye Tackle

Sensitivity is the most important factor in winter walleye tackle. Hits are often light. Interpreting what is happening at the end of the line is critical. If possible use a sensitive graphite rod, 7 feet long for shore fishing, 6 feet long for boat fishing. But nearly anything reasonably close will do. I prefer to mate it with a spinning reel, though this is unimportant.

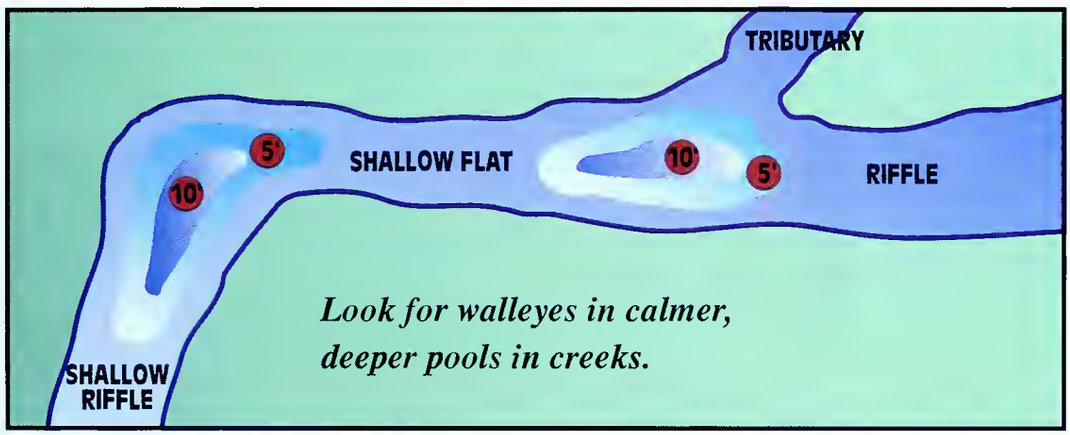
No need for heavy line. Walleyes seem to be line-shy. Among the serious winter walleye anglers I have met, 8-pound-test is the standard.

You will also need 1/8-ounce and 1/4-ounce leadheads, size 4 hooks, splitshot, assorted sinkers to 3/4-ounce, and a landing net. For comfort, which gives you the staying power to wait for the big walleyes, carry a hand towel, two pairs of gloves and hand warmers. Also consider a camera. Most serious walleye anglers, once they get a few big walleyes under their belts, prefer to release the big breeding walleyes, except maybe a wallhanger. You also need a flashlight because the best fishing is often at night.–*MB*.

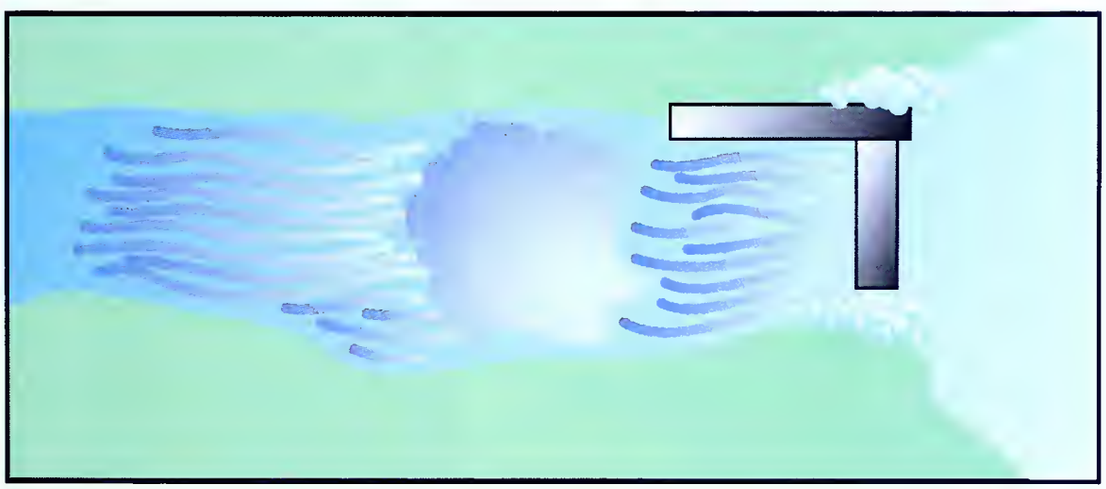


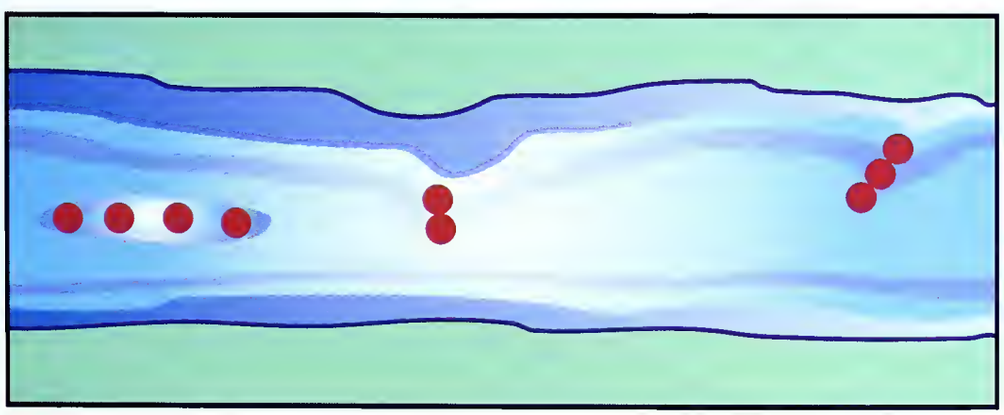
10 Winter Walleye Waters

1. ***Allegheny River:*** Kinzua Dam Tailwaters, Tionesta, most pools, navigation locks & dams.
2. ***French Creek:*** Cowanesque Creek mouth; larger pools.
3. ***Ohio River:*** Below the dams.
4. ***W. Br. Susquehanna River:*** Loyalsock Creek to mouth.
5. ***Susquehanna River:*** Pools, York Haven Dam tailrace, Brunner Island Power Plant warmwater discharge.
6. ***Delaware River:*** Milford down through the Water Gap, and bigger pools above Milford.
7. ***Beltzville Lake:*** Until it freezes.
8. ***Tailrace of Blue Marsh Lake:*** First 75 yards below the dam.
9. ***Tailrace of Nockamixon Lake.***
10. ***Juniata River:*** Deeper pools; also Raystown Branch to dam.–*MB*.



At the tailwater of smaller dams look for walleyes around the discharge plume, typically extending 50-100 yards downstream from the dam.





In larger river pools look for walleyes around humps of various configurations like those marked here. Walleyes might also roam the channel.

graphics-Ted Walke

Pennsylvania's BIGGEST SMALLMOUTH BASS

by Dan Tredinnick

Its strikes are jolting and once hooked its strong runs and acrobatic jumps are just as breathtaking–small wonder the smallmouth bass is one of Pennsylvania's most popular gamefish.

Fortunately, the waters that hold this feisty member of the sunfish family are readily accessible all across the Commonwealth. The state's largest river system, the Susquehanna, is home to one of the nation's best smallmouth fisheries, as is Lake Erie. But smallmouth can be found just about anywhere the habitat can support them.

Fiercely territorial, smallmouth bass sometimes strike anything that comes into their vicinity. Then again, on some days getting anything to hit is a real challenge. By studying the records kept by the Commission's Angler Awards Program, we can get a glimpse of how, where and when Pennsylvania's biggest smallmouths are caught.

To earn a Senior Award for smallmouth bass, an angler 16 or older must land a fish weighing four pounds or more. An angler under 16 can earn a Junior Award for a smallmouth weighing at least 3.5 pounds. In 1993, exactly 101 anglers caught award-sized smallmouth bass. Maybe their techniques can work for you.

For example, the top smallmouth of 1993 was typical of the year's trends. Although its size was unusually large at 22.25 inches, with a 16.5-inch girth and weighing 7 pounds, (just 10 ounces below the state record), the story behind its catch exemplified that of the majority of smallmouth on the award list. That is, the fish was caught on an artificial lure–a Jitterbug–and it was pulled from the northwestern tier–Venango County's Justus Lake–during the month of June.

Where

The northwestern part of the state dominated the top of the list of big smallmouths, accounting for nine of the 10 largest fish.

Lake Erie alone produced four of the top 10 smallmouths, including a 6-pound, 10-ounce bronzeback. Justus Lake, Venango County; the Monongahela River, Allegheny County; Lake Wilhelm, Mercer County; the Allegheny River, Allegheny County; and Edinboro Lake, Erie County each surrendered a smallmouth that landed in the top 10.

Only a 5-pound, 4-ounce fish from a stretch of the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County prevented a northwestern sweep.

Overall, the citations were a bit more evenly distributed, though Lake Erie did account for 35 wallhangers. The Susquehanna River produced 18 lunkers, while the Juniata River, which flows into the Susquehanna, gave up 13 trophies.

How

Artificial lures were the clear choice of anglers who caught big smallmouths in 1993. In the top 10, seven bronzebacks hit an artificial. The other three? Two took minnows, the third, a crayfish.

Surprisingly, while artificials dominated in terms of overall preference, the single most effective bait was a live minnow. In all 21, big bass where taken on minnows. Other naturals that did well were crayfish (5), stonecats (5) and hellgrammites (3).

There was no clear preference among the scores of lures used by anglers, though Gitzits (6) and Mr. Twister (4) artificials seemed to enjoy popularity.



photo-Wally Eberhart

When

According to the records, the opening of the season in June produces the best smallmouth fishing. In half a month, 25 award-sized bass were landed. In July, 19 trophies were landed while August accounted for 16 wallhangers. September and October also saw their share of action, with 14 big bronzebacks landed then.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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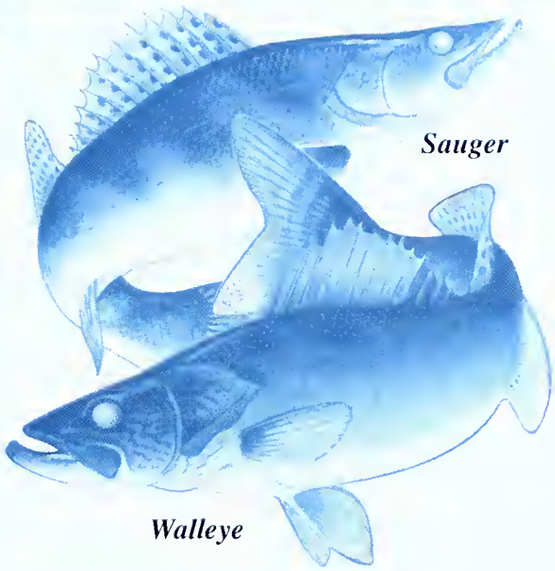
BUREAU OF PROPERTY AND FACILITIES MANAGEMENT
814-359-5100
James Young, P.E., *Director*
James I. Waite, *Division of Construction & Maintenance Services*
Eugene O. Banker, P.E., *Division of Property Services*

BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
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Edward W. Manhart, *Director*

BUREAU OF BOATING
717-657-4540
John Simmons, *Director*
Virgil Chambers, *Division of Boating Safety & Education*
Andrew Mutch, *Division of Boat Registration*

BUREAU OF EDUCATION & INFORMATION
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Stephen B. Ulsh, *Director*
Kimberly S. Mumper, *Education*
Carl E. Richardson, *Education*
Art Michaels, *Magazines, Publications*
Dan Tredinnick, *Media Relations*
Larry Shaffer, *Video, Special Events*
Ted R. Walke, *Graphic Services*

Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Small walleyes and saugers look very much alike. Examine the front dorsal fin, and if there is a single black spot, then it's a walleye. Saugers have a series of small dark spots on the front dorsal.

The best times to use dry flies for trout are during the morning and evening hours. And remember that the color of a dry fly is not as important as its size and its shape.

If you don't want to use a fly rod when fishing for trout, try an ultralight spinning rod and matching reel. These small, whippy rods let you cast small lures and jigs easily, and they make playing even small fish a joy.

Big fish, no matter what the species, most often prefer the protective shelter of deep water. If you want to catch a trophy fish, find the spots where shallow water meets deep water. Look for dropoffs, holes and structure, and fish the edges.

An easy way to "doctor" your bass lures is to use fingernail polish. Pick up some glitter flakes at a craft or hobby store, and a few colors of fingernail polish, especially clear. Simply paint the polish onto the lure, and then sprinkle some of the glitter onto the wet polish.

When tying flies with tinsel bodies, like many streamer patterns, it is easy to make a smooth body if you use one easy trick. After tying the tinsel in at the rear of the hook, lay your second wrap of tinsel directly over the first wrap. Then, using slight downward pressure, pull the tinsel toward the eye of the fly. You will feel a small "click" as the second wrap falls off the first wrap, and nicely into place.

Hooks are never as sharp as they should be directly out of the package. Carry a small hook hone in your vest or tackle box and give the hooks of your lures and flies a few swipes with the hone immediately after tying it on. If you get into the habit of doing this, it will result in more fish caught over time.

Wet flies are supposed to be fished below the surface. To ensure that your wet flies sink properly, tie the flies out of materials that absorb water. Use wool for the body when you can, and tie it on heavy-wire hooks. Wetting the fly with saliva before casting also helps the fly to sink.

Spread your fingers as wide as possible, and measure the span between your little finger and your thumb. You'll never again have to hunt around in your tackle box or vest for a ruler to measure the length of the fish you catch. Remember also that a dollar bill is 6 1/8 inches long.

illustration- Tom Duran

New Art Competition Rules

The Commission is seeking wildlife artists to participate in the 1996 Pennsylvania Trout/Salmon Stamp and Print competition. Artists can submit a work featuring one of the Commonwealth's scenic waters.

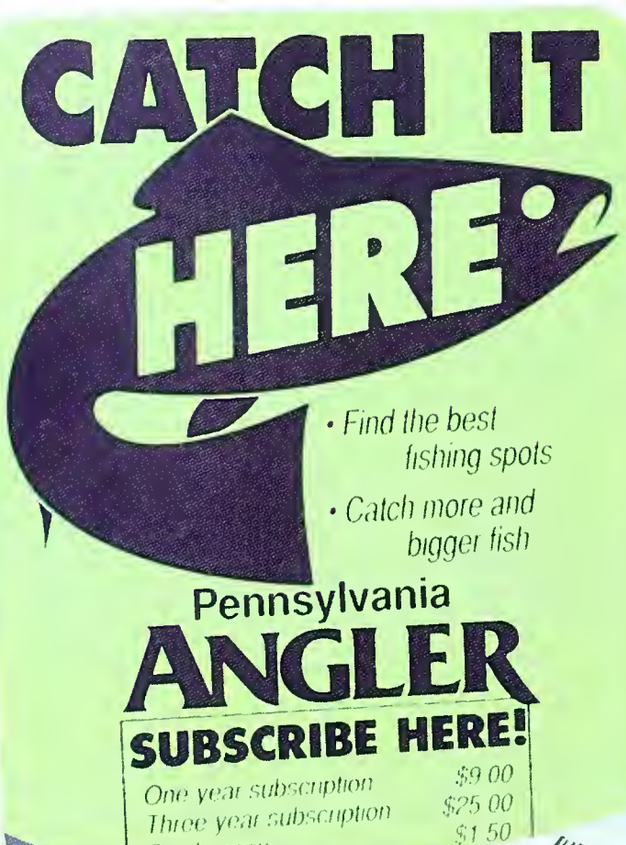
For the first time since its inception in 1991, the Trout/Salmon Stamp will not center on a particular salmonid. Instead, the subject will be a specific stream section. A total of 25 streams from across the state have been selected as potential subjects for competing artists. Submitted images should include anglers and/or trout, but the primary focus must be one of the streams selected for this program.

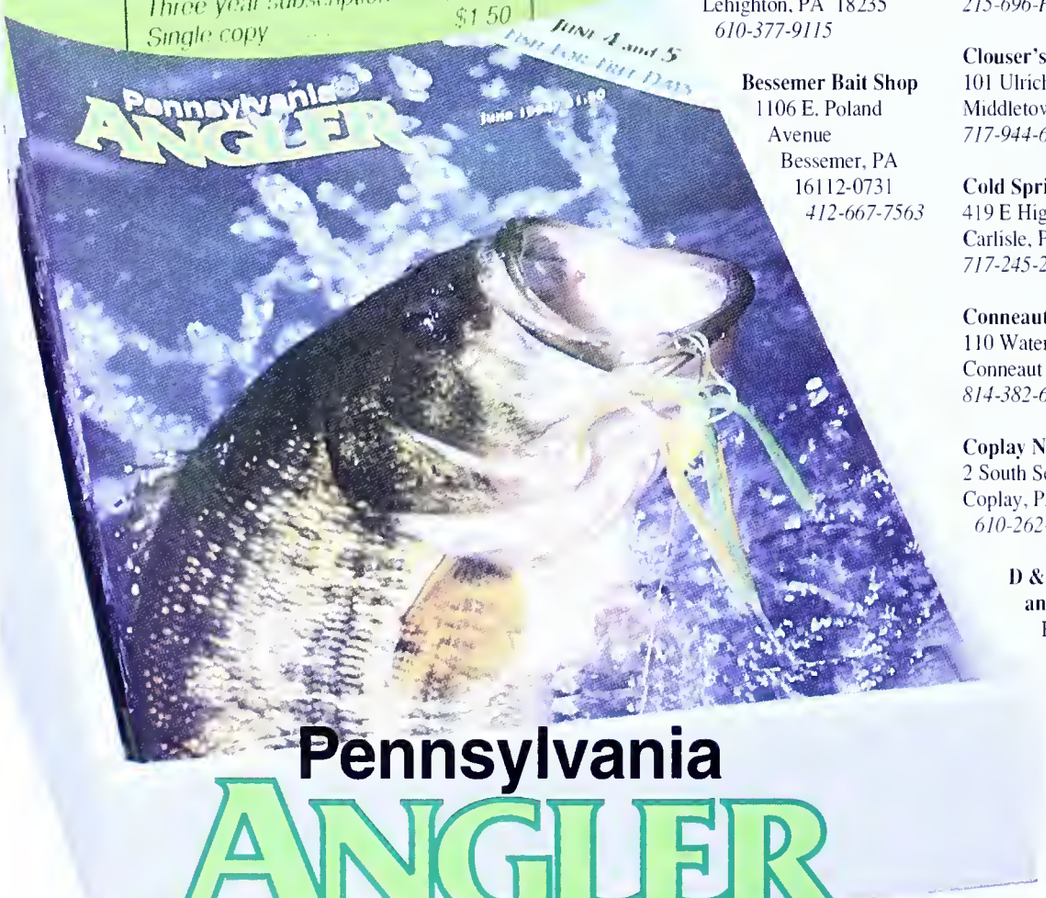
The work must be in oil, acrylic or watercolor and measure 12 inches by 18 inches with a one-inch border. Artists must submit a completed entry form with the image. Noted on the form must be the stream depicted. The section pictured will be checked for authenticity.

Entries must be submitted by 4 p.m., May 18, 1995. Judging will be held May 25, 1995, at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Kleinfeltersville.

The top entry will be featured on the stamp that is required for all licensed trout anglers.

For more information, including the official rules of entry, artists should write to Timothy L. Klinger, Trout/Salmon Stamp Program Manager, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, or call (717) 657-4537.





Pennsylvania ANGLER NETWORK

The *Pennsylvania Angler* Network is the group of tackle shops, bait stores, sporting goods establishments, bookstores and newsstands that sell *Pennsylvania Angler* magazine and subscriptions over the counter. To all of our Network members the Commission extends a big "thank you" for your help and cooperation.

Anderson's Appalachian Trail
RD 1
Prospect PA 16052
412-865-2178

Andrejko Sporting Goods
193 West End Road
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702
717-829-6666

Angler's Pro Shop
1340 Justus Blvd.
Clarks Summit PA 18411
717-586-6170

Barry's Live Bait
139 E. Green Street
Hazleton, PA 18201
717-454-0841

Bart's Tackle Shop
460 Lovett Avenue
Tullytown, PA 19007
215-943-0174

Beltzville Pro Fishing
5620 Interchange Road
Lehighton, PA 18235
610-377-9115

Bessemer Bait Shop
1106 E. Poland Avenue
Bessemer, PA 16112-0731
412-667-7563

Black's Bait & Tackle
24 East Pine Street
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
717-374-BAIT

Boardman Fly Fisherman
5667 Mahoning Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44515
216-726-3773

Bressler's Food Mart & Sports
611 W. 15th Street
Tyrone, PA 16686
814-684-0341

Brinkman's Bait & Tackle
4999 Linden Avenue
Philadelphia PA 19114
215-632-0674

Ceglar's Bait & Tackle
624 Lehigh Lane
Altoona PA 16602
814-944-0587

Chip's Bait & Tackle
325 E. Gay Street
West Chester, PA 19380
215-696-FISH

Clouser's Fly Shop
101 Ulrich Street
Middletown PA 17057
717-944-6541

Cold Spring Anglers
419 E High St, Ste A
Carlisle, PA 17013
717-245-2646

Conneaut Lake Tackle
110 Water Street
Conneaut Lake, PA 16317
814-382-6095

Coplay News & Tackle
2 South Second Street
Coplay, PA 18037
610-262-5987

D & M Guns and Supplies
RD 1, Box 1735
Freeland, PA 18224
717-636-1209

Dale Clemens Custom Tackle
444 Schantz Spring Road
Allentown, PA 18104
215-395-5119

Danny's Sporting Goods
7851 Paxton Street
Harrisburg, PA 17111
717-564-6736

Dave's Sports Center
1127 North Easton Road
Doylestown PA 18901
215-766-8000

Davis Sporting Goods
9 Charleston Street
Wellsboro PA 16901
717-724-2626

Efinger Sporting Goods
513 W. Union Avenue
Bound Brook, NJ 08805
908-356-0604

Elk Creek Sports
10543 Old Lake Road
Lake City PA 16423
814-774-8755

Fergie's Bait & Tackle
RD 3, Box 70
Sandy Lake, PA 16145
412-253-3655

Ferguson's Sports
408 N Mountain Road
Harrisburg PA 17112
717-545-3040

Fishing Creek Outfitters
RR 1, Box 310-1
Benton PA 17814
717-925-2225

Fly Fishing Tackle Shop
Route 390, PO Box 178
Cresco, PA 18326
717-595-3694

Flyfisher's Paradise
2603 E College
State College PA 16801
814-234-4189

Forest County Sports Center
311 Elm Street
Tionesta, PA 16353
800-458-6093

Fort Hunter Bait & Tackle
5415 N Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110
717-599-5412

Four Seasons Sporting Goods
29 Broadway
Jim Thorpe, PA 18229
717-325-4364

Gohn Brothers, Inc.
870 Delta Road
Red Lion, PA 17356-9998
717-244-4449

Gordon's Sport Supply
Route 100, Box 700
Uwchlan, PA 19480
215-458-5153

Gordon's Sporting Good
3048 West Chester Pike
Broomall, PA 19008
215-356-6178

Great Northeast Sport Shop
1822 Sixth Street
Bethlehem, PA 18017
215-861-8118

Haller's Sporting Goods
632 Elm Street
Tionesta, PA 16365
814-755-4475

Hansen's Bait Stand
83 Peninsula Drive
Erie, PA 16505
814-838-1642

Hart's Sporting Center
RD 7, Box 170
Johnstown PA 15905
814-288-5099

Hornick's Sporting Goods
316 Broad Street
Johnstown PA 15906
814-535-7724

Indiana Angler
218 Grandview Avenue
Indiana, PA 15701
412-463-2011

International Angler
503 Freeport Road
Pittsburgh PA 15215
412-782-2222

J & W Hardware
3208 Carlisle Road
Dover, PA 17315
717-292-4299

Jim Hakes Sporting Goods
100 Willow Street
Wrightsville, PA 17368
717-252-1072

Lehigh River Bait & Bow
209 W Union Street
Allentown PA 18102
610-432-2511

A.F. Leidy Hardware
1010 Gravel Pike
Schwenksville, PA 19473
610-287-8121

Lewistown Fishing & Hunting
224 Logan Blvd.
Burnham, PA 17009
717-248-8889

Little Store
Route 62, Box 608
East Hickory, PA 16321
814-463-7660

Leonard's Sporting Goods
8508 Lansdowne Avenue
Upper Darby, PA 19082
610-449-6409

Little Professor Book Center
1647 N Atherton Street
State College, PA 16803
814-231-2665

Mac's Sporting Goods
127 West Main Street
Ligonier, PA 15658
412-238-4900

Maurer's Trading Post
1696 Pittsburgh Road
Franklin, PA 16323
814-437-9570

Manhart's
RD 8, Box 8478
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301
717-223-0644

Mike's Bait & Sport Shop
328 East Lawn Road
Nazareth, PA 18064
215-759-2905

Mahoning Valley Milling Co.
3018 Indiana Street, POB 48
Punxsutawney, PA 15767
814-938-8850

Nockamixon Sport Shop
808 Doylestown Pike
Quakertown PA 18951
215-538-9553

Oil Creek Outfitters
RD 1, Box 206
Oil City, PA 16301
814-677-4684

Paterson Rod & Gun
1012 Goffle Road
Hawthorne, NJ 07506
201-423-2442

Peck's Pond Store
HC 67, Box 485
Dingman's Ferry, PA 18328
717-775-7237

Pro Am Fishing Shop
5916 Tilghman Street
Allentown, PA 18104
215-395-0885

Pop's Bait & Tackle
Route 940, Dee's Deli Complex
Pocono Lake, PA 18347
717-643-7677

Punxsutawney Outfitters
210 West Mahoning Street
Punxsutawney, PA 15767
814-938-9018

Rick's Bait & Tackle
RR 2, Box 2424
Reading, PA 19605
610-926-8888

Robinson's Gun & Tackle
855 Street Road
Southampton, PA 18966
215-357-7381

Russell City Store
Route 66
DeYoung, PA 16728
814-968-9930

S & S Sport Shop
1010 E. Main Street
Rockwood, PA 15557
814-926-2465



Hal Meck, Shelly's Sporting Goods, New Cumberland, PA.

Shelly's
440 Bridge Street
New Cumberland PA 17070
717-774-7400

Simko's Sporting Goods
Route 403, Box 23
Tire Hill, PA 15959
814-288-6880

Sisters Country Sports
Route 1, Box 86V10
Dingman's Ferry, PA 18328
717-828-2929

Sportsmen's Center
US Highway 130 North
Bordentown, NJ 08505
609-298-5300

Sportsman's Rendezvous
113 W. Harford Street
Milford, PA 18337
717-296-6113

Stamric Sporting Goods
8 S. York Street
Etters PA 17319-0489
717-938-8876

Steve & Sons Tackle Shop
1016 Lawrence Avenue
Ellwood City, PA 16117
412-758-3600

Susquehanna Fishing Tackle
1226 Harrisburg Pike
Lancaster PA 17603
717-397-1399

The Outdoor Shop
Box 310 Main Street
Volant PA 16156
412-533-3212

The Sporting Gentleman
306 E Baltimore Pike
Media PA 19063
215-565-6140

The Tackle Shop
399 S 30th Street
Harrisburg PA 17103
717-238-6668

Tom's Auto & Marine
S. Greenwood
& Mountain Ave.
Tamaqua, PA 18252
717-668-5066

Transue's Bait & Tackle
321 Butler Road
Kittanning, PA 16201
412-543-2971

Trop Gun Shop
709 Cloverleaf Road
Elizabethtown, PA 17022
717-367-5585

Trout Run Sports, Inc.
438 North Reading Road
Ephrata, PA 17522
717-738-2525

Tyrone News Agency
20 West 10th Street
Tyrone, PA 16686
814-684-0167

Unkel Joe's Woodshed
3415 Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16602
814-942-4900

Venango Rod & Gun Shop
1218 15th Street
Franklin PA 16323
814-437-2666

Wacky Worm, Inc.
Route 209, Box 82
Gilbert, PA 18331
215-681-6226

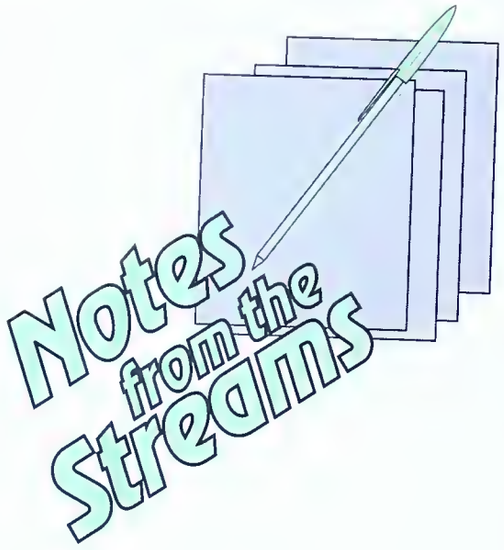
Wellington Sporting Goods
140 Main Street
Souderton, PA 18964
215-723-6217

Westside Bait
& Sporting Goods
453 West 8th Street
West Wyoming, PA 18644
717-693-0248

Wimpy's Tackle Shop
1018 Chestnut Street
Douglasville, PA 19518

Yellow Breeches Outfitters
2 First Street, P.O. Box 200
Boiling Springs, PA 17007
717-258-6752

Young's Mart
2073 Sumneytown Pike
Woxall, PA 18979
215-234-4567



It's open!

While patrolling with Wildlife Conservation Officer Don Burchell, we received a complaint that a beaver dam on Harvey's Creek had caused the water to overflow onto the road. Don decided we should pull open part of the dam to keep the rain-swollen stream from completely covering the road. As I tugged on a particularly well-stuck branch, it suddenly gave way, causing me to fall into a large pile of mud and branches the beavers had placed next to the stream. When he stopped laughing long enough to help me up, Don decided we had opened up the dam enough. Thanks, Don!–*Jeff Bridi, WCO, northern Luzerne County.*

Crime doesn't pay

While working undercover at a trout fishing contest, Officer Terry Hannold and I observed a well-known violator kill more than his limit of trout. When we decided to approach him concerning the violation, he was nowhere to be found. We knew who the violator was, so we filed a citation based on our observation, charging him with possession of 12 trout, four over the legal limit.

At the request of the violator, a hearing was held. Officer Hannold and I testified that we had observed the defendant kill 12 trout, but that he had left before we could confiscate the evidence. Officer Hannold had cited the individual before for the offense, but the details of that violation were not pertinent to the case at hand and therefore not admissible.

When it came time for the defendant to tell his side of the story, it was not surprising to find the only defense he offered was that we had no evidence. He also said that the last time he was arrested for being over the limit, "Hannold took all my trout." When the judge asked how many fish were taken, the defendant replied "twenty-six." Officer Hannold corrected the defendant saying, "No, it was 27."

Even before the judge rendered her guilty verdict, I think the defendant realized he should have been better prepared.–*WCO Fred Mussel, Lehigh County.*

Lunker crayfish

Work to replace the Juniata River bridge at Thompsontown last summer necessitated the construction of a causeway upstream to access the new construction and both sides of the river. The causeway consisted of fist-sized stones and large corrugated pipes.

While checking anglers in the area one evening I looked in the bait container of a man from Blair County and found 15 of the largest crayfish I have ever seen. These were legitimate "Louisiana crawdads," very healthy, colorful and all six inches or more in length.

I remarked about the size of the crayfish, and the fisherman said, "You should see the big ones on ice in the car." He said the crayfish in the bucket were the "little" ones–the lunkers were being taken home for dinner.

Even more astounding was his description of how they were caught. The evening before, he and his family walked along the causeway picking crayfish from among the stones. They were actually crawling on the causeway from the downstream side and crossing the 30-plus feet of dry area to the upstream side and reentering the water. He said there were so many you had to be careful not to step on them. They were also very aggressive and had pinchers the size of a man's thumb.

A deputy and I returned to the area a few nights later and witnessed a small repeat of the migration consisting of smaller, but still nice-sized crayfish.

Knowing the quantity and quality of what is lurking on the bottom of the Juniata, I would hesitate before doing any barefoot wading.–*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

You be the judge

Last March, Jason Lamertina, a seasonal employee, and I were taking basket willow cuttings at Fisherman's Paradise on Spring Creek when a gentleman fishing nearby approached us. He asked why we didn't remove the entire bush, because, he said, they were a hindrance to fly fishermen. I explained that willows benefit the stream by providing shade and stream bank stabilization.

A few minutes later we were approached by a woman from Wisconsin who commented how nice and open it was along the creek. She said it was much easier to fish here than on Wisconsin streams. She noted the beauty of Pennsylvania streams and that she thought residents took them for granted.

Isn't it amazing how two people can look at the same situation and see it so differently?–*David L. Keller, Western Area Coordinator, Stream Unit, Habitat Management Section.*

Deputy retires

DWCO Bill White recently retired after 31 years of dedicated service to the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania. During his time with the Commission, White served under five WCOs, four regional supervisors, three executive directors and four Commissioners. He has also undergone three title changes, from "special fish warden" to "deputy waterways patrolman" to "deputy waterways conservation officer." Over the years White has been the recipient of many awards, but the one he is most proud of is a Red Cross certificate of merit he received in 1985 for rendering life-saving aid to a heart attack victim.–*Charrie Seifert.*

Support conservation agencies

WCOs Bridi, Burger and I proudly represented the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission at the 1993 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officer's Association Conference in Rapid City, SD. This educational event brought together conservation officers from throughout North America, providing valuable resource protection and enforcement training and information. Without interagency cooperation and training, the battle to curtail the ever-growing abuse and black-market commercialization of our fish and wildlife resources cannot be dutifully fought.

We discovered that our peers from other areas are just as dedicated as we are to sportsmen and natural resources. We took a moment to pay tribute to those who gave their lives in the line of duty–far too many have fallen while working to protect our valuable resources. Conservation officers everywhere routinely confront armed suspects, work on watercraft during dangerous flood or frigid conditions, expose themselves to often unknown chemicals

or pollutants during investigations, patrol rugged and remote areas on foot, ATV, four-wheel-drive vehicles, aircraft or horseback, confront and subdue dangerous (and often exotic) animals, and assist with just about any emergency they happen to encounter. They take these risks on behalf of public safety and resource protection.

Officers must continually update their training and rely on public support and understanding to reduce job-related risks. Please support your conservation agencies and their resource and public safety education programs. Our lives and your resource future depend on it.–*Guy Bowersox, Assistant Supervisor, Southcentral Region.*

Unselfish devotion

When high waters recede, public fishing and boating access areas often are left with truckloads of mud and debris. This makes our facilities unsightly and dangerous for recreational use. Cleanup is always a challenge, requiring considerable expense, manpower and equipment–financed mostly by your fishing license and boat registration dollars.

On behalf of the anglers and boaters of the Commonwealth, I would like to thank a group of unselfish youth for their efforts in cleaning up several truckloads of debris at the Commission's Sunbury Access along the Susquehanna River. They worked through sweltering 90-degree temperatures and braved poison ivy, broken glass, rusty nails, splinters, high weeds and some very unfriendly hornets–all to provide a safe and clean access to the river.

Many thanks to Kreamer's "All For One" 4-H members Ryan Dunkleberger, Brady Bachman, Dan Dunkleberger and Sandy Spotts, and to Mt. Pleasant Mills Boy Scout Troop 417 members John Womer, Ed Bowersox and Luke Womer. Great job, gang! Our state needs more volunteers with devotion like yours.–*Guy Bowersox, Assistant Supervisor, Southcentral Region.*

Frostbite

The Southcentral Region Office recently received an interesting phone call. The caller wanted to know if there was a problem eating fish that had freezer burn. The caller was assured there was no danger in eating freezer-burned fish, but the flavor might be lacking.

After experiencing what has to be one of the coldest winters in memory with many days in the 20- to 30-degree-below-zero range, I wonder if these unfortunate fish arrived at this condition by being in the freezer too long, or were they caught already in this state?–*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

Giving them a bath

Just when I think I've seen all the places anglers can hide illegal fish, I find a new one to add to the list. At the request of Deputy Gary Walter, who was on stakeout, I encouraged a repeat offender to open the hood of his truck. Deputy Walter assured me I would find eight trout over the limit in a box under the hood. The only thing resembling a box was a plastic windshield washer reservoir that appeared to be filled with fluid. Popping off its lid, I found the illegal trout in about three inches of washer solvent. When I asked the driver if he planned to eat the soap-soaked fish, he replied, "Why not? They had to be cleaned anyway."–*Guy Bowersox, Assistant Supervisor, Southcentral Region.*

Mistaken identity

Waterways conservation officers are often mistakenly referred to as wildlife conservation officers. Recently, the misidentification went a bit too far. When my neighbor, George Mock of the Game Commission, returned from a mid-winter tropical vacation, I received an obviously misaddressed greeting–a road-killed muskrat in my newspaper box. Trout season is coming, George!–*Brian B. Burger, WCO, Centre County.*

Officers on ice

Who in his right mind would jump in the icy waters of Lake Nessmuk, Tioga County, in the middle of January? Waterways conservation officers and their deputies, of course.

On a brisk January weekend, officers from the Northcentral Region met at the lake to participate in an ice emergency self-rescue training program held by the Commission's Bureau of Boating. Two holes were cut in the 16-inch-thick ice and one by one, each officer jumped in the water and climbed out–not once, but twice. Ice fishermen on the lake stared in disbelief, and most hastily pulled up their tipups and left the area. If you were among the anglers on the lake that day, you weren't the only one who thought we were a little unbalanced. Our wives also found it difficult to believe what we had been doing.

We learned important self-preservation techniques that day, and yes, we each wore a protective suit during the dive. Most of the suits didn't leak, but Northcentral Region Assistant Supervisor Bill Hartle can identify one that did!–*Guy Bowersox, Assistant Supervisor, Southcentral Region.*

Don't throw out Type IV PFDs

Until recently, the seat cushion Type IV personal flotation devices (PFDs) were accepted for each person on board a boat less than 16 feet in length, as long as they were U.S. Coast Guard approved and in good condition. A change in the regulations no longer accepts the Type IV devices as the only form of PFDs required for these vessels. You now need either a Type I, II, III, or V jacket or vest-style PFD that is Coast Guard approved for each person on board. But don't throw out your serviceable Type IV cushions–they make great cushions for a hard boat seat. They're also great to take along ice fishing for both safety and seating comfort. Put a cushion on top of a 5-gallon bucket to make a day on the ice more comfortable. Tie a length of rope to it and you have a rescue aid that might help save a life during an ice emergency. Remember that boats 16 feet and longer are still required to carry one serviceable Type IV PFD onboard, in addition to a wearable Type I, II, III, or V device for each person. Think safety when afloat–wear your PFD.–*Guy Bowersox, Assistant Supervisor, Southcentral Region.*

Let's do lunch

While patrolling State Game Lands 57 last deer season, I stopped at Mountain Springs Lake to eat lunch. I was enjoying the scenery when I caught sight of a "V" in the water. Expecting to see a beaver, I was delighted to find an otter fishing for its lunch. Although the otter was not as talkative as some of my lunch companions, I certainly enjoyed our "lunch meeting."–*Jeff Bridi, WCO, northern Luzerne County.*

Jaws?

Don Ruhmel, of Berwick, contacted me last year to inform me of a piranha he had found along the banks of the Susquehanna River. I would have found the report hard to believe except for the photograph he gave me. The toothy critter was definitely a piranha about 12 inches long. This certainly gives new meaning to a "No Swimming" sign.–*Jeff Bridi, WCO, northern Luzerne County.*

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Home Waters

I drove around for a while and couldn't see anything familiar at first, but I finally located a grade where there had been a railway spur. The tracks were long gone. At one time they had run alongside my weedy bass pond of long ago, but I guess the pond had been drained. I saw one depression where the pastureland had slightly different vegetation, and that must have been the place. But there were no homes nearby, and after half a century I doubted that I'd find anyone who considered me anything except some ancient oddball in case I made inquiry. I guess they'd be right. I left.

For a time, the bass pond was home water that I could reach after work. We kept a neat little wooden skiff there with paddles. I knew where the bluegills lived and there was a weedy stretch near the railroad grade where largemouth bass would take a hair-winged bug on late summer evenings. It was on the pond that I saw what appeared to be a very, very tall angler–but he was simply using what later was called a "floater bubble." His was a truck innertube with appropriate lashings, the first such craft I had seen.

There was a big fallen tree against a little island, its bark long gone as it rotted away in four feet of water. When I'd paddle by very late in the evening it would be a ghost with white, leafless branches. I threw casts at it for two years, but only undersized bluegills responded and I gave up on it.

A guest named Jack admired my little pond and cast expertly with his bamboo bug rod while I paddled carefully. Only an undersized bass responded over the weeds and we came in late. As we passed the old tree, Jack wanted to try it and I slowed down without comment. He threw his bug to about the same spot I'd tried in vain for all those evenings, and it is unnecessary to tell what occurred. When he released the big bass, he said it had been a fine trip.

"I thought something like that might happen by that old tree," he said, and I made no comment.

Familiarity with fishing water is an important part of the game. I know a truly master angler who travels the world for exotic fish, but always comes back to a rocky, roaring little stream where a nine-inch brookie is a prize. He seems to know all the bigger fish in his creek and has released them many times. It is his creek although it is deep in a national forest. Of late, when I fish in a trout stream far from my home, I wonder just who really knows that water and has fished it for years.

For several seasons we stayed very near a well-known limestone creek, and while I toiled, my wife, Debie, visited it regularly in late afternoon. I'd fished it many times, too, but perhaps I was less perceptive.

My friend had to have a movie of a spring creek, and since good anglers were supposed to be intellectual rather than handsome, he asked if I'd fish for him. I spent a morning with little flies over suspicious trout I thought I knew, and caught only tiny ones, despite an assortment of lenses aimed from behind a bush and my version of professional casting. My photographic friend appeared frustrated. I was humiliated.

Debie arrived to bring us lunch and she put on her waders.

"There is a two-pound brown that lives over there below that wad of watercress," she said.

"Yeah, yeah, you catch him, Debie," the cameraman placated. "Charley, try this one over here by the moss again."

"He made a bubble," Debie said, lengthening line. "You want to shoot it if I get him?"

"Yeah, yeah, Debie," consoled the photographer, briefly checking focus in Debie's direction. The long lens swung smoothly above the tripod. He came back to me.

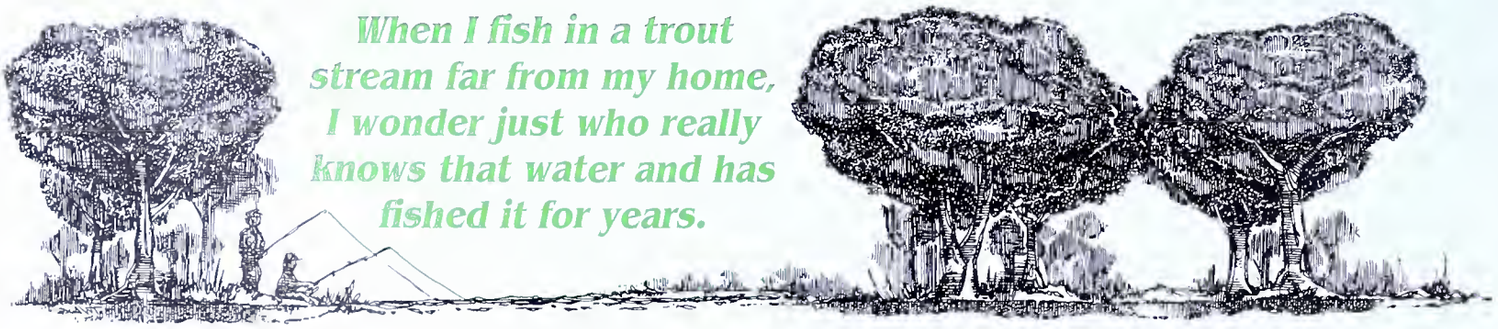
"There he is," Debie said. "Watch it. He's gonna jump!"

I reeled in and splashed out of the way. There was a lot of commotion with the photographer yelling orders. No problems.

"Now," said the photographer, "we need to get some background stuff. Debie, let's shoot some feet of you putting your rod together and looking around the creek before you get in."

"That's sure a nice fish," Debie said. "I've caught him before."

She was in home waters and I don't know how many more trout she had located. I retired from acting. It's a frivolous business. But I'd kind of like to see the movie they made of me before Debie brought the lunch.



When I fish in a trout stream far from my home, I wonder just who really knows that water and has fished it for years.

Illustration-Ted Walke

SMART Angler's Notebook

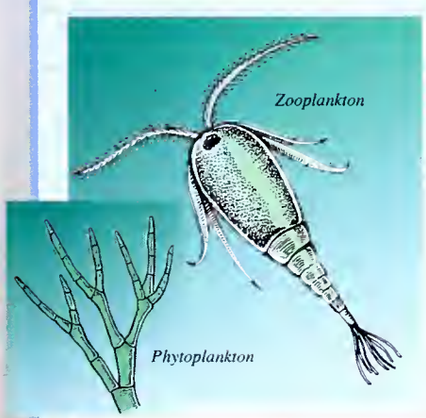
by Carl Richardson

Fish and Fish Food

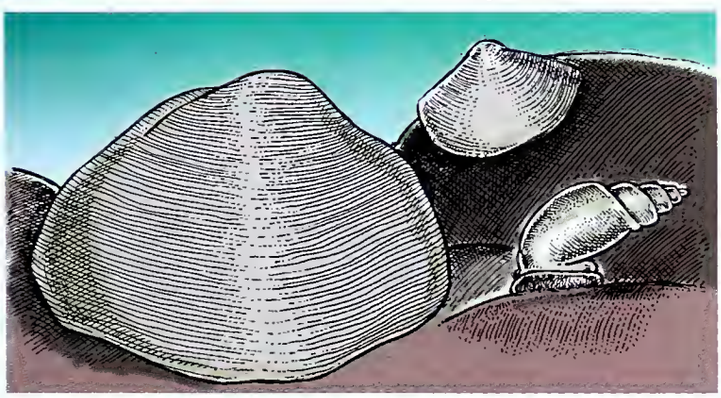
Knowing what fish like to eat makes lure or bait selection a little easier. Offering something that looks like or is exactly what the fish are eating can add to your fishing success, but there are no guarantees.



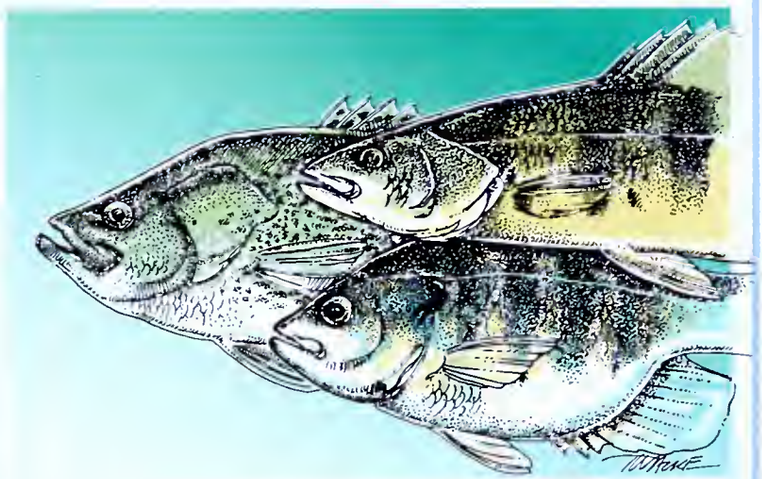
CRAYFISH They are very important food for smallmouth and largemouth bass and trout in large streams and rivers. Crayfish are found in waters where there are plenty of rocks or waters with sandy bottoms with lots of vegetation.



PLANKTON Tiny microscopic living things. Some are like plants and can make their own food and are called *phytoplankton*. They are eaten by other kinds of plankton called *zooplankton*. They both are eaten by all the other things that fish like to eat. Young gamefish also make a steady diet of these tiny morsels.



SNAILS AND CLAMS Some species of fish, like green sunfish, have special teeth for grinding the shells of these creatures.



FISH After late summer the young that hatched from eggs laid earlier that year are important food items for most gamefish. Largemouth bass key on young bluegills and other panfish. Walleyes and pickerel feast on young perch. In the spring, trout feast on young trout. Minnows, darters, suckers, sculpins and other small fish are eaten all year.







INSECTS There are many insects that spend a part of or all of their life underwater. Mayflies, dragonflies, and caddis flies make up a big part of the diet of most fish that live in streams and rivers and some lakes.

OTHERS This includes the many other kinds of things that call our waters home. Worms, leeches, freshwater shrimp and some amphibians are on the menu.





Illustration-Ted Walke

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Straight Talk

Shad Restoration Partnerships

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) has established a firm foundation for the restoration of migratory fish in some major rivers in the Commonwealth. Shad, herring and American eels were known to have migrated into many tributaries, and in some cases, to the very spring sources of those tributaries. Today, many Susquehanna River tributaries have hundreds of small dams blocking the movement of migratory fishes.

Many of these dams no longer serve their original purposes as grist mills, canal feeders, hydropower and water supply sources. At the time, the dams' adverse ecological consequences received little consideration. Today, those consequences include severely damaged habitat for resident stream fish and elimination of migratory fish runs. Working together as partners, we can restore free-flowing stream habitat and establish migratory fish passage routes on the tributaries of the Susquehanna River.



Lawrence W. Hoffman
Executive Assistant
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

Working with the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Program and the Baltimore District Army Corps of Engineers, we can support a broad spectrum of environmental improvements in the Susquehanna River Basin. Development of fish passage and habitat, and fisheries restoration are priorities.

To assist restoration efforts, the PFBC has enlisted the help of the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to conduct an inventory of blockages on Susquehanna River tributaries. Included in the inventory, which has already begun, is a request for an assessment of the amount and quality of habitat upstream of each blockage. The results of this assessment will be used to set work priorities for fish passage and habitat restoration.

Some of our priorities have been established for a long time, such as breaching dams that no longer serve an essential purpose. For instance, the Commission owns Rock Hill Dam, the first dam on the Conestoga River, Lancaster County. The dam already has a small breach. Chesapeake Bay Program funds will be used to assist in restoring that portion of the river to a free-flowing stream. Other individuals, groups and companies that plan to modify, maintain or improve a particular dam can be expected to meet the provisions for fish passage as specified by the Commission. Owners of small dams on tributaries to the Susquehanna River and environmentalists can expect to be enlisted as partners in restoring free-flowing stream conditions and allowing fish passage.

At this time, you may be asking how you or your sportsmen's club can get involved in promoting shad restoration efforts on the Susquehanna River. Perhaps one of you may want to take a leadership role and form a "Susquehanna River Shad Angler's Association" (SRSAA). A model to follow is the successful Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association. It's not too soon to show interest and become involved in the Commission's restoration efforts. If you are fascinated with catching shad on the Delaware River, you will be elated when you can enjoy the same sport on the Susquehanna. The first step is to organize a group that can work with the Commission and become familiar with the Commission's goals for the Susquehanna River Basin. Through the right media coverage, the organization should grow and be able to provide substantive support. The key is to get the ball rolling early to promote shad restoration. Eventually, fund-raising efforts can be started to support future initiatives. One can be an advocate for shad restoration, and at the same time, an advocate for clean water. Establish a goal to maintain so many miles of clean, free-flowing river for shad and later support those who will fish for them.

To catch fish, the angler must have access to the river. You can help by identifying future access sites where boat ramps and parking facilities can be built. Promoting public access by working with landowners to keep their lands open to fishing and promoting installation of fish passages will be crucial. Littering is one of the main reasons why public access is difficult to maintain, let alone the difficulties that littering creates in obtaining new sites. Perhaps the proposed SRSAA could contract with trash haulers to place dumpsters at crucial locations, or the group could place trash barrels and empty them with volunteer labor. Your involvement is only limited by one's imagination.

On a more technical side, the association could donate money or manpower to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or to the Commission to conduct fish counts, stock shad fry and river herring, monitor movement and populations of shad and river herring, and participate in creel census and angler surveys. Lastly, it is important to conduct educational programs to teach people how to fish and to promote fishing opportunities.

Does the vision of partnerships sound like a dream? I hope not! However, to become a reality it will take one or more enthusiastic individuals to assume a leadership role to enhance, conserve and protect the shad and herring fisheries now and for future generations. Are you that person? If so, identify yourself to me at (717) 657-4546. It's not too soon to get started!

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This issue's cover, photographed by Barry & Cathy Beck, shows Pennsylvania angler John Ebeling trying his luck in northcentral Pennsylvania.

A magazine issue is born

Every year-and-a-half or so, I meet with the *PA Angler* regular contributors–they are listed on this page–and we plan feature articles for 18 to 24 months. In this way we ensure a mixture of articles from all parts of the state, and coverage of a wide variety of topics. We talk about new and successful fishing trends and methods. We discuss waterways that are coming on strong. We share information from Commission experts, from letters I receive from readers, and from our regular contributors' combined field experience.

I also share information with editors and others in conservation agency education and information. We compare notes on what readers like and what they dislike. We talk about what works in conservation agency magazine publication and what doesn't. I arrive at our regular contributors' meetings armed with this information, too.

I also survey readers on their fishing, and on their preferences for items that appear in the *Angler*. We've conducted these surveys since 1983.

I also bring to these planning meetings Commission policy and the magazine article needs of other Commission areas. On page 29 of this issue, look just below the Commission keystone logo and read the Commission's mission. That's our foremost consideration in these meetings.

These are the main guides in our planning *Angler* issues.

–Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.

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Lehigh River
SHAD RESTORATION

BY DENNIS SCHOLL

American shad restoration in Pennsylvania took a giant step forward in the spring of 1994 with the opening of two fish passageways on the lower Lehigh River in Northampton County. Designed to provide access to the Lehigh for shad and other species, the fish ladders–one located at the confluence of the Lehigh and Delaware rivers in Easton and a second four miles upstream at Glendon–opened to mixed, but nonetheless welcome, reviews.

Eighty-seven shad migrated through the maze of concrete pools at the Easton passageway, which circumvents the southern end of the Easton Dam. They were the first shad to enter the Lehigh since it was dammed by the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company in 1829. Fish using the new facility were monitored around the clock, from mid-April through the end of May, by video equipment located in a darkened viewing room constructed for biologists. Two other shad got to the passageway's uppermost chamber, but decided to turn around and re-enter the Delaware. Monitoring did not take place at the Glendon (Chain) Dam.



The Easton ladder also provided a migratory avenue between the Delaware and Lehigh for hundreds of white suckers, carp, muskies, catfish, smallmouth and largemouth bass, trout and sunfish. Striped bass also used the ladder shortly before it was dedicated in October 1993.

At a cost of $3 million, were the passageways a success in their first year of operation–despite passing just 87 shad? Anglers who expected the ladders to provide an instant shad fishery didn't think so, but biologists involved in the project had other opinions.

"The ladders are doing their job. They're doing what they were designed for," says Commission Area 5 Fisheries Manager David Arnold, whose management area includes the Lehigh. "The Lehigh was always losing fish to the Delaware, for all species except the eel. They were migrating out. Now they have the ability to come in."

"It's very fish-friendly," adds Richard Mulfinger, a Commission engineer who assisted in the project's conceptual design. "Any fish that can find the opening can move through it. And if one passed through, they can all pass through. It's just a case of how we attract more fish. It's going to take a little fine-tuning."

Arnold says that a team of design specialists and biologists from the Fish and Boat Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Boston will examine the passageways and make recommendations for ways to increase the number of shad using them. Because shad are attracted to fast-flowing water, particular attention will be paid to the flow that exits the Easton passageway's lowermost chamber, which is located very close to where the waters of the Lehigh and Delaware mix. Without a "magnet" to pull shad to the ladder, the fish simply will keep heading up the Delaware.

"It's supposed to be a directional flow, and we have to find the right flow adjustment," says Arnold. "We probably won't know that for a couple of years."

Unusual weather

Compounding normal adjustments that surround a first-year project was the unpredictability of last spring's weather. First came an inordinate amount of runoff from the snowiest winter on record. Then came torrential downpours in late March and the first few weeks of April. The Delaware was so high that anglers could not safely fish the river until late April. At one point in mid-April there was no telling the Lehigh from the Delaware at their confluence in Easton; the waters of the two rivers mixed and completely covered the Easton Dam and most of the passageway. The Delaware remained high enough for the next 10 days to two weeks that shad in the vicinity virtually had no way of even discovering there was a ladder for them to enter.

"It was an odd year," Arnold says. "The conditions were just not right. And when you had the right conditions, it only lasted for a couple of days. The majority of the shad using the Easton ladder climbed between April 27 and 29. The fish were so dispersed. There were no successional waves of groups of fish coming up the Delaware as there were in other years."

photo-Art Michaels

Historical perspective

American shad were a major source of food each spring for the Lenni Lenape Indians and, later, the Moravian settlers of Bethlehem. Lehigh River shad fell victim in the early 1800s to a burgeoning coal industry that used the Lehigh as a means of transporting coal from mines at the foothills of the Pocono Mountains to markets in Philadelphia. When the Lehigh itself proved too risky a way to carry coal south, a canal was dug along its northern bank from Mauch Chunk to Easton. A series of dams was built to provide water for the canal, including a crib dam at Easton that effectively blocked shad migration. That impediment to migration remained for more than 150 years.

Resurgence

With the resurgence of shad fishing in the Delaware River in the 1960s, attention eventually swung to restoring the species to tributaries such as the Lehigh and Schuylkill. In April 1973, Fish Commission biologists began a four-year study to determine the feasibility of restoring shad to the Lehigh. Eggs from fish caught in the Delaware were hatched in the Lehigh at several trial sites. Survival rates proved excellent at sites south of Palmerton, where mine acid drainage was still a major detriment to fish and invertebrates.

When the study was completed in 1976, however, the Commission concluded that restoration was not feasible because of the inferior quality of Lehigh River water entering the Delaware at Easton. Even though Commission biologists thought that adult and juvenile shad would survive once in the Lehigh, they reasoned that the fish wouldn't choose the river in the first place given the better quality of water flowing in the Delaware.

At about the same time, a sportsmen's group called the Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association (DRSFA) organized in the Lehigh Valley and adopted as one of its goals the restoration of shad in the Lehigh. In 1982 the DRSFA joined with the Lehigh River Preservation, Protection and Improvement Foundation (LRPPIF) in a shad-stocking and egg-hatching experiment that would manifest itself a decade later.

Catching shad on hook and line in the Delaware that spring, DRSFA and LRPPIF members transferred adult fish to the Lehigh in a large, homemade aerated tank. They were released at the Tri-Boro Sportsmen's Club in Northampton, but were never seen again. Several weeks later, hundreds of thousands of shad eggs from Delaware River fish were placed in the Lehigh in homemade hatch boxes, but high water washed away many of the boxes and no juvenile fish were found.

The organizations tried again in 1983. The LRPPIF transferred 41 adult fish from the Delaware and again hatched several hundred thousand eggs. This time, the experiment worked. On August 18, LRPPIF members seining the Lehigh south of Bethlehem netted two juvenile shad, the first "natives" to be taken from the river in 154 years. The catch of the two juveniles, netted some 20 miles from where they hatched, triggered more involvement.

In 1984, the DRSFA successfully introduced into the Pennsylvania Legislature a bill that sought $3.3 million to construct the passageways at Easton and Glendon. The "Fish Ladder Bill" sailed through the House and Senate, but financing for the project was ultimately cut from the state budget by Governor Richard Thornburgh.

The DRSFA tried again in 1985 with a new strategy and a new governor–Robert Casey–in office. Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the DRSFA funded a creel census survey that provided an accurate account of how many fishermen were using the Delaware River shad fishery and how much money a similar fishery in the Lehigh River would bring to the Lehigh Valley economy. The survey, completed at the end of the 1986 shad run, indicated that more than 65,000 anglers fished the Delaware for shad and that a Lehigh shad run would be worth about $2.1 million annually to local businesses.

Armed with that information, the DRSFA attended city, borough, township and other municipal meetings in the Lehigh Valley in an attempt to obtain endorsements for the new shad ladder legislation. Governor Casey then began receiving an enormous amount of letters and telephone calls in support of the project. Finally, a huge stack of petitions signed by more than 40,000 sportsmen from around the state was delivered by DRSFA and LRPPIF representatives as well as members of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

At the same time, the Fish Commission began stocking the Lehigh with shad fry in an attempt to create a population that would imprint on the Lehigh. To monitor the shad, biologists at the Commission's Van Dyke Hatchery in Thompsontown, Juniata County, placed the fry in a "bath" that contained tetracyline, a chemical that is absorbed into a bone called the otolith. Tetracyline can be detected by ultraviolet microscopy, thus revealing whether fish originated in the hatchery or not. By identifying hatchery fish, biologists would be able to determine the success of the stocking operation. Between 1985 and 1993, 6.8 million fry were released by the Commission at the Tri-Boro Sportsmen's Club.

Public support for the project grew even more. As Mulfinger points out, "When you get overwhelming public support, that's what makes the politicians aware." In the fall of 1988, Casey included the fish passageway bill in the state's supplemental budget. One year later, he came to Easton to announce his approval of funding for the project. Construction began in late summer of 1992 and was completed one year later.

The future

Even though there is no hard-and-fast timetable established, the Fish and Boat Commission hopes that someday the Lehigh will support a run of between 165,000 and 250,000 fish. The passageways (including a third passageway at the Samuel Frank Memorial Dam in Allentown, opened in 1984) are constructed to handle that many fish, which will have access to more than 35 miles of river. If there comes a time when the population is on the verge of exceeding 250,000, additional ladders can be constructed on the opposite ends of both the Easton and Glendon dams.

But the focus is still on the present. Biologists and volunteers are on the lookout this year for juveniles that will be examined for tetracyline on the otolith. If the young fish don't have traces of tetracycline, then Arnold will know that natural spawning occurred among some of the fish that climbed the ladder. Biologists will continue juvenile samplings for the next three to five years, and will also stock fry annually in an attempt to create a population imprinted to the river.

So after nearly 10 years of legislative struggles and subsequent construction, is 87 a number fishermen and biologists should be happy with?

"It was 87 more than were there 150 years ago," says Mulfinger. "I think Americans always want things instantaneously, and biological things take more time than that. The Lehigh can now only be better."

Dennis Scholl is president of the Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association.

The Tangled WEB

by Darl Black

Line plays a significant part in fishing success. But most fishermen take line for granted. They don't think about it much until something goes wrong. Then they are quick to blame the line. But with the number of quality products on the market, chances are the problem was more their fault than that of the line. Perhaps they chose the wrong line for the situation, failed to care for line properly, or tied a knot poorly or incorrectly.

Frenzied competition among major tackle firms has led to advancements in fishing lines. This certainly has benefited us by providing vastly improved line, but at the same time it's created a confusing maze of products and claims from line companies.

The fishing line scene is a tangled web of strands. How should you choose a line among the dozens of different monofilament? Should you switch to the new braided line? How should you care for line? Which knots are best? Let's see if we can untangle this bird's nest.

Understanding monofilament

Nylon monofilament is the fishing line that the majority of anglers use on their spinning, casting and spin-cast reels. According to one line company, 90 percent of all fishing lines used in the world are nylon monofilaments.

The invention of nylon in 1938 paved the way for the introduction of monofilament lines, which gradually replaced twisted linen and braided silk lines. The popularity of nylon lines surged after World War II when spinning reels made their appearance. However, the early monofilament lines were crude by today's standard. The modern monofilament era started in the late 1950s with the introduction of DuPont's Stren and Berkley's Trilene.

"Monofilament" means "single filament." Nylon pellets and additives are melted together and filtered. The resulting liquid is cooled and squeezed through a die, and then stretched to the desired diameter. The process is referred to as extrusion.

The process is the same for all nylon lines. Yet, all brands do not perform the same when spooled and fished. The difference between a premium line and a bargain-basement line is quality control. With a premium line, you are buying consistent diameter and uniform composition throughout the line. But even among premium lines, characteristics such as limpness, elongation, knot strength, shock strength and abrasion resistance vary. Line characteristics are controlled by using different resins and additives in the mixture.

The perfect nylon monofilament line has not been engineered. In structuring a line for certain properties, trade-offs occur. For example, making an extremely limp line increases line stretch but makes for poor hook-setting ability. Building in extreme abrasion resistance results in a stiff line that doesn't spool well on a reel. Even though some lines offer a balance of properties, others are made with more specific purposes. Anglers must decide which properties are more important to their style of fishing.

Ironically, the U.S. line industry doesn't have any standards when it comes to judging line. American anglers buy line according to "pound-test" rating, which supposedly is a measure of strength, but that rating may have little to do with the actual break strength of the line. A company can sell a line labeled 10-pound test, but the line may actually break at 14 pounds. In many other parts of the world, line is sold by diameter with a break strength provided for a given diameter.

Tensile strength, an "in" phrase with monofilament, is nothing more than a mathematical relationship between the breakload and line diameter. High tensile strength simply means high break strength in a low-diameter line. Super-thin high-tensile monofilaments made their appearance in U.S. tackle shops during the late 1980s, and continue to grow in number each year.

"Copolymer" and "cofilament" are terms that also pop up in nylon line discussions. The basic nylon material in line is called a "monomer." A chemical reaction changes the raw material to a "polymer." There are various types of polymers. A homopolymer is a single polymerized monomer. A "copolymer" is formed by the polymerization of two or more different monomers. A copolymer is still a monofilament, but with certain enhanced properties achieved by mixing in a different nylon polymer.

A "cofilament" line is an entirely different critter. It is a line within a line. One nylon polymer serves as a wrap, or sheath, over an inner core of an entirely different polymer. Repeated attempts by DuPont to create a practical cofilament have not been successful in the past, although Stren currently has new cofilament on the market, called "Crankin' Line."

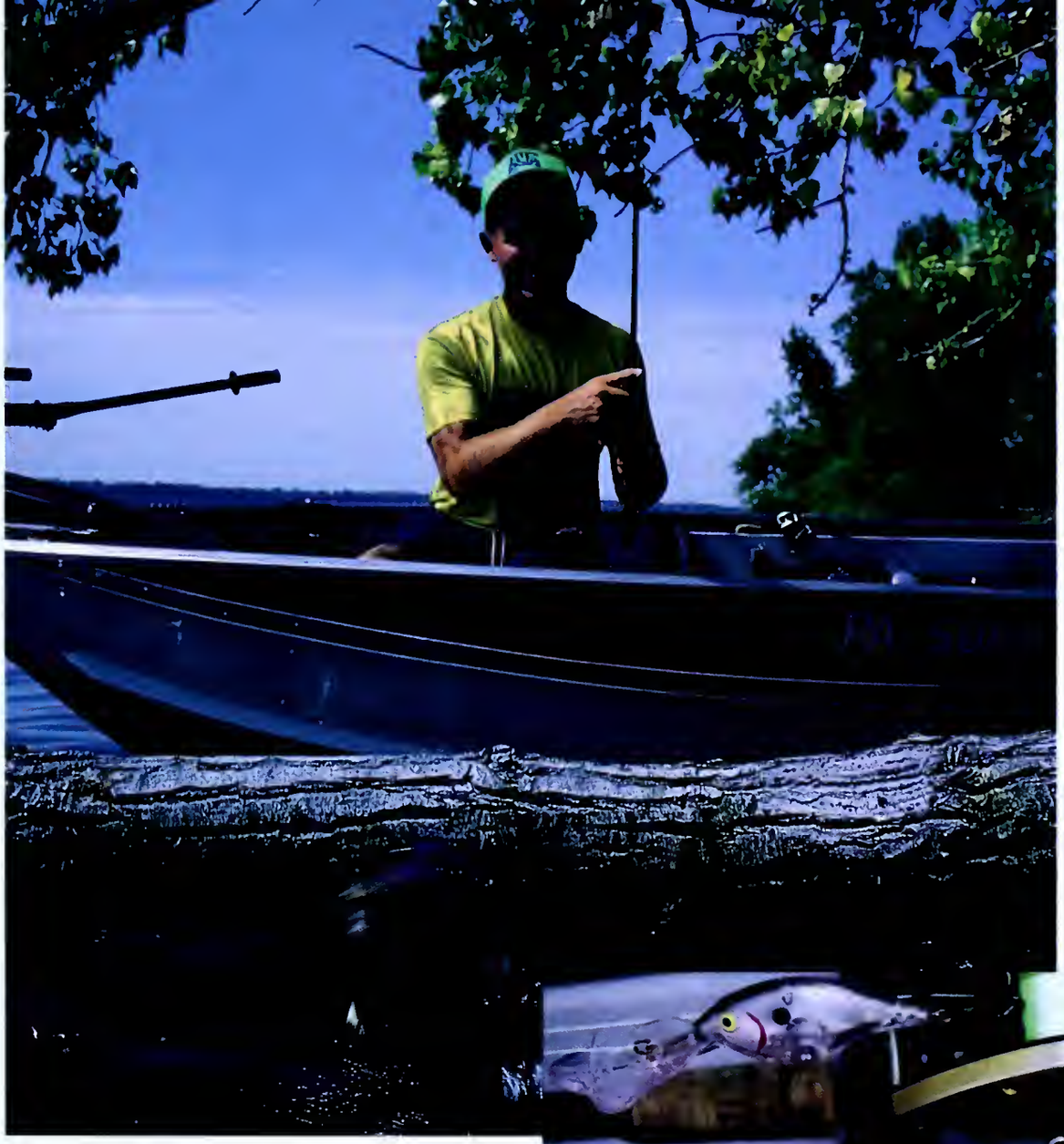
New braided lines

"What's new about braided lines?" asks a musky fisherman. "I've been using braided Dacron line on my jerkbait rod and trolling rod for 30 years."

True. While not as popular as nylon monofilament, Dacron polyester braided lines have been around since about 1950. Compared to nylon monofilament, old-style braided line is cumbersome, thick diameter, and very difficult to cast when using lightweight lures.

However, new braids made from space-age fibers have characteristics that set them apart from previous braided lines, as well as monofilaments: (1) incredibly strong; (2) extremely abrasion-resistant; (3) very thin diameter; and (4) almost zero stretch.

Line stretch has always been a concern for anglers, particularly when setting the hook. Too much elongation in a line translates to lost fish. Nylon monofilament has 25 percent to 35 percent stretch. Dacron has 12 percent to 18 percent stretch. Many new braided lines have less than 5 percent stretch. However, almost total lack of stretch creates other problems that will be addressed shortly.



Low pound-test lines are suited to light-action rods, fine-wire hooks, lightweight lures and relatively open water. Heavier pound-test lines are needed when fishing large lures with heavy duty hooks requiring forceful hook sets, and in situations where the line is likely to rub constantly against rocks, brush, weeds or wood.

Line diameter can be important for working lures in deeper water. The smaller the line diameter, the deeper crankbaits dive. Lightweight jigs sink quicker on thinner lines. But if you go too thin (lowering the pound-test) for the cover situation, breakoffs will occur.



Most new braided lines are produced from a high-density polyethylene fiber called Spectra, invented in the 1980s by a German firm. There are other variations, too. Fenwick has introduced IronThread, which is braided from Tekmilon fibers, a gel-spun polyethylene multi-filament similar to Spectra. DuPont created a braided line made from Kevlar fibers.

These new lines are made from multiple filaments braided together. Because extremely fine filaments are involved, the finished line diameter is unbelievably small. An example is 25-pound-test 100 percent Spectra, which has the same diameter of typical four-pound-test monofilament.

Angler needs

If you are selecting line simply based on "weight" of fish you are after, disregard this thinking. It is possible to land a 10-pound fish on four-pound-test. On the other hand, an angler may need 20-pound test to land a two-pound fish.

It's all a matter of matching line to tackle and fishing environment. In the first case mentioned above, the angler may be dealing with steelhead in open water on the shores of Lake Erie with a long, forgiving noodle rod. The second scenario may be an angler flipping a jig with a heavy-wire hook for bass on a stiff-action rod in a tangled mass of stumps and brush.

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Mono memory

"To my way of thinking, there are two entirely different ways of looking at monofilament lines," explains Lee Duer, a hard-core angler and frequent fishing companion. "An angler needs a line for a spinning reel and a line for a free-spool casting reel. For spinning, I look for low spool memory and limpness—the strongest possible tensile strength and still be limp. In a casting line I want a lot of abrasion resistance. I don't have to be

photos-Darl Black

concerned about line jumping off the spool, so I can accept a stiffer line on my casting reels."

Duer points to the small diameter of spools on freshwater spinning reels as the overriding factor why a spinning line needs to be limp. "Too stiff a monofilament doesn't lay on the spool properly. Many of the new super-thin monos, while being hyped as spinning lines, are actually too wiry to use on spinning reels."

Duer believes standard 10-pound-test or a super-thin 12-pound-test line (one with no more than .012 diameter) is the maximum line that can be comfortably used on a standard freshwater spinning reel. Thicker diameter lines create problems for most anglers, unless a larger size spinning reel is used.

When purchasing monofilament line, be sure to buy the type of line that functions best with your selected tackle option. It's a good idea to request a line brochure from all major line companies to review their different lines. Do not depend on information from a store salesman when buying fishing line.

Trying to fish a stiffer line intended for a free-spool baitcaster on a spinning reel is going to cause headaches. Be sure the line you buy for a spinning reel was specifically designed for a spinning reel, or at least is one of the all-purpose lines.

Pros, cons of braided line

"I prefer to use the lightest line I can get away with," says Ernie Pate, Jr., an experienced angler who specializes in spinning tackle for all situations. "This means a small diameter, yet with enough strength to handle the fish and the fishing conditions. With a spinning reel, it's particularly important for a line to have very low memory. Otherwise it coils up like a Slinky. No memory is one of the big advantages of the new braided lines."

Pate has been using braided lines for about one year, providing an ample opportunity to test the many claims of the new line. Besides the no-memory characteristic, he is impressed with the strength and lack of stretch. Because the line is so abrasion resistant, Pate now throws baits into places he would never have considered with nylon monofilament. No stretch also means increased sensitivity, which is the quality most anglers notice right off.

"The line transmits everything it touches," Pate says. "It takes some getting used to because every tick on the bottom feels like a fish smacking the bait. A light-biting crappie on braided line feels like a five-pound bass hitting on monofilament."

"Sensitivity is the number one advantage of braided line," says Duer. "Nothing could possibly compare to it. It's like having your hand right on the lure."

Because there is no stretch, hook sets require little effort—more like a wrist snap than a full rod snap. Everyone who has used braided line has stories of sending small fish sailing into the air on setting the hook.

The new braided line is expensive. A typical 150-yard spool of premium monofilament sells for about $6.00. A 150-yard spool of braided line goes for anywhere between $12.00 and $35.00, depending on the pound-test rating. The price jump is attributed to the slow braiding process.

Still, the new braided line is not without problems. Claims that muskies and pike cannot cut through it are false. Toothy critter bite-offs do occur, although perhaps not as often as with monofilament. Even though braided line may not be as prone to tangling on a reel as monofilament, when it does happen it is impossible to pick out. Cutting is usually required. The line must be cut with a sharp knife or special razor scissors. Many knots do not work in braided line. Super glue is usually applied to ensure that a knot does not slip.

"Because the line is so limp, it has a tendency to loop around the tip of the rod or around guides," says Duer. "If the line is wrapped around a rod on a hook set, the rod will likely break."

"Some anglers are going to get hurt," Pate says. "With no stretch, if you set the hook on a stump or other solid object with line wrapped around a hand or finger, it will slice your skin like a knife."

Both Duer and Pate agree that braided line is more air resistant than monofilament because of more surface edges. Therefore, casting distance is reduced, and casting accuracy is more affected by wind.

Because they cannot be made clear or translucent like monofilament, braided lines are highly visible in the water—even when they are dyed gray or green. This visibility factor may be a concern for many anglers, particularly when fishing clear water.

Knot sense

Tying a knot in a line weakens the line, whether it is monofilament or braided. Some knots may reduce the break strength rating of monofilament by 50 percent. Many knots tied in braided line slip.

There are many different knots. The best approach is to keep the number of knots you personally use to a minimum. Select a few essential knots, and learn how to tie them properly and quickly—even in the dark.

Fortunately, there are knots that work equally well for braided Spectra and nylon monofilament. At least two different knots are needed: One to attach a line to a lure, snap, split ring or hook, and a second for joining two lines together.

The Palomar Knot generally receives the highest rating for maintaining near 100 percent of break strength of nylon line. It is also favored by many for braided line. The knot is used for attaching terminal tackle. However, because it requires a loop to be passed over the object, it is troublesome when tying on a large lure or any lures with treble hooks.

The Uni-Knot tests very high on knot-tying machines, and it is the easiest to tie correctly time after time. The Uni-Knot can be used to snell a hook, too, and it can be turned into a loop knot for certain baits by not cinching it tightly to the lure. It works equally well for braided line.

The Trilene Knot is widely used by anglers because it is intensely publicized by a major monofilament line company. However, this knot is more difficult to tie properly than a Palomar or Uni. Even though the Trilene Knot tests between 85 percent and 90 percent of the original strength of the line, both the Palomar and Uni Knot test over 90 percent.

When it comes to joining two lines of near equal diameter, such as splicing fresh line to filler line on a reel's spool, the Blood Knot shines. If the lines are not the same diameter or if you're attaching braided line to monofilament, the best knot is back-to-back Uni-Knots.

Whichever knots you use, cinch them slowly and carefully. Be sure to moisten the knot and adjacent line before cinching to reduce damaging heat caused by line friction when snugging

the knot. Do not hesitate to clip a poorly tied knot and retie it. Test each finished knot by pulling on it. Never fish a questionable knot.

Line care

Compared to nylon lines, the new braided lines seem to be carefree. The best information at this time indicates that braided line retains its original integrity indefinitely without any special precautions. These lines apparently are not affected by extended exposure to sunlight or heat, unlike monofilament. Braided line remains limp and memory-free even after a full year on the reel spool—no monofilament line can make that claim.

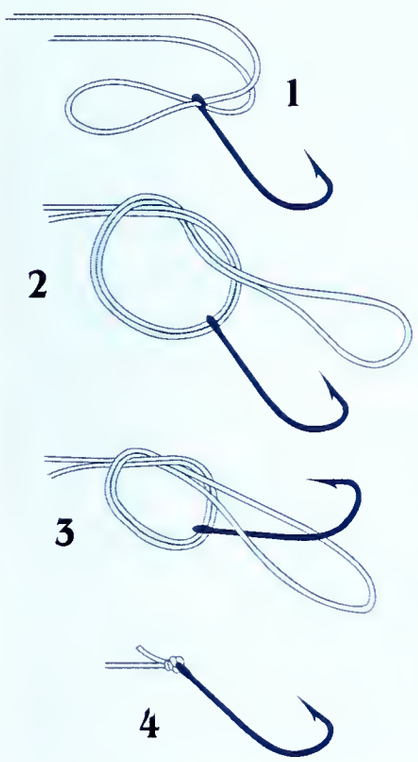
On the other hand, bulk spools of nylon monofilament should be stored in a cool, dark place. Reels should not be exposed for any length of time to super-heated conditions like car trunks or rear window ledges. Fresh monofilament should be spooled on a reel several times during a fishing season, especially whenever the old line takes a "set" or when it becomes badly twisted.

The break strength of monofilament is severely reduced with the slightest nick in the line. Frequently check the several feet of line immediately in front of the bait or lure for possible abrasion. If you discover an irregularity, snip the line and retie right away, before a fish breaks it for you.

Monofilament Pound-Test Line Recommendations

Although these recommendations for specific use do not necessarily address line diameter or accurate break strength, the pound-test rating is mostly widely understood by anglers and is therefore the basis of this chart.

Typical use	*Pound test*
Trout, most panfish situations	4- or 6-pound test
Grubs, finesse baits for bass	6- or 8-pound test
Topwater bass lures	12- or 14-pound test
Spinnerbaits for bass in cover	14- to 17-pound test
Plastic worms for bass	10- to 14-pound test
Pitching, flipping for bass in cover	17- to 25-pound test
Casting bottom-bumping crankbaits	10- to 14-pound test
Flatline trolling in open water	8- to 12-pound test
Live bait for walleyes	6- to 10-pound test
American shad	6-pound test
Steelhead on Erie beaches	4- to 6-pound test
Steelhead in tribs (more obstacles)	6- to 10-pound test
Hybrid stripers on lures	12- to 17-pound test
Northern pike (use wire leader)	10- to 14-pound test
Jerkbaits for muskies (use wire leader)	25- to 40-pound test
Flathead/big channel cats with bait	minimum of 20-pound test
Carp	as light as you dare



Palomar Knot

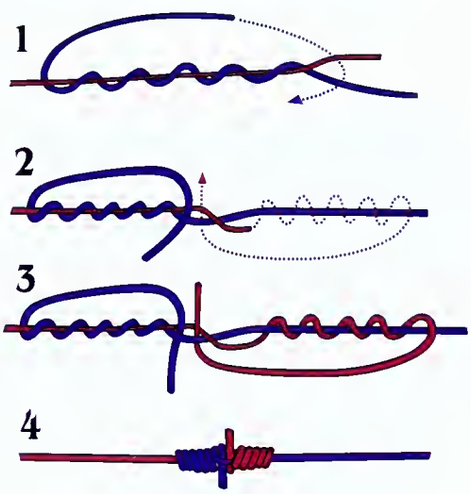
1. This easy knot is consistently strong for holding terminal tackle. Double about four inches of line and pass the loop through the hook eye.

2. Let the hook hang and tie an overhand knot in the doubled line. Don't twist the line, and don't tighten the knot yet.

3. Pull the hook through the line far enough to pass it over the hook. Make sure the loop passes completely over the hook. This knot works equally well with swivels and lures.

4. Pull both the tag end and the standing line to tighten the knot. Clip the end about an eighth-inch from the end.

Simplified Blood Knot



1. Use this knot to join lines of about the same diameter. Take the two line ends and tie a simple overhand knot. Tighten to combine the two lines into one.

2. Form a loop where the two lines meet, with the overhand knot in the loop. Pull one side of the loop down and begin taking turns with it around the standing line. Keep the point where the turns are made open so the turns gather equally on each side.

3. After eight or 10 turns, reach through the center opening and pull the remaining loop (and overhand knot) through. Keep a finger in this loop so it doesn't spring back. Hold the loop with your teeth and pull both ends of the line, making the turns gather on either side of the loop.

4. Set the knot by pulling the lines as tightly as possible. Tightening the coils makes the loop stand out perpendicular to the line. Clip off the loop and overhand knot close to the newly formed knot.

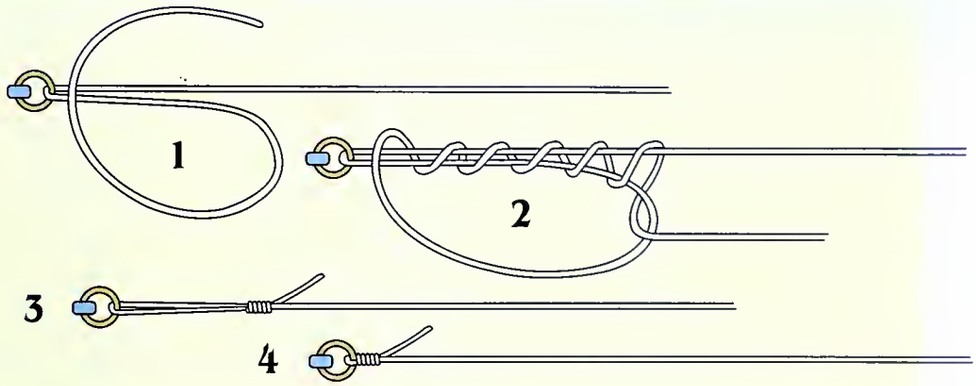
Uni-Knot

1. The Uni-Knot System starts with one knot, the Uni-Knot, created by Vic Dunaway. To tie on terminal tackle, run the line at least six inches through the hook eye or other terminal tackle. Fold the line to make two parallel lines. Move the end of the line back toward the hook eye, forming a circle.

2. Make six turns with the tag end around the double line and through the circle.

3. Hold the double line at the point where it passes through the eye, and pull the tag end to tighten the coils.

4. Pull the standing line to tighten the knot against the hook eye, and trim the tag end.



graphics: Ted Walke

WINTER TROUT TACTICS

by Harry W. Murray

The rewards are truly great at this season. You now find solitude where there were crowds in milder seasons, the beauty unveiled by the chill and snows is breathtaking, and best of all, the trout can be very cooperative.





The gratifications one realizes on outsmarting a specific fish after repeated confrontations over hours, days and even weeks elevate angling to a special plain.

photos-Harry W. Murray

Winter can provide the finest trout fishing any angler could ever want, and Pennsylvania has some of the most gratifying angling to be found anywhere.

The rewards are truly great at this season. You now find solitude where there were crowds in milder seasons, the beauty unveiled by the chill and snows is breathtaking, and best of all, the trout can be very cooperative.

To take advantage of this fine action, examine how the trout react to their chilled environment and adjust your tactics accordingly.

As the water temperatures drop, so does the trout's metabolic needs for food. They simply do not require as much food to sustain themselves as they did in warmer water. The demanding factor in this formula for the angler is that now the trout are not willing to exert a great amount of effort to capture food.

The best catches are now made by slowing your approaches to evaluate every foot of the stream carefully in an effort to locate feeding trout and prime feeding areas.

Yes, you can definitely find feeding trout during the winter, and yes, these fish may actually be sipping insects from the surface. I well remember the advice of one of Pennsylvania's master anglers and a close friend, the late Vince Marinaro, concerning this aspect of winter trout fishing. "Don't overlook the olives...don't overlook the little olives," Vince repeated over and over, in almost a lecturing chant. His point finally sank in and I became as much of an admirer of the little olive mayfly hatches that occur on many of our spring creeks as Vince was.

There are some guidelines concerning the little olives (*Beatis vagans*) that most anglers reflect on, but I must caution you that these little fellows frequently violate every rule on every page of the entomology books.

I encounter my best olive hatches on heavily overcast days, but this condition does not ensure their presence, and occasionally they emerge on bluebird days. The naturals are a small, delicate size 18, so a rising trout often alerts us to their presence before we spot them on the water. Thus prompted, a closer scrutiny of the stream's surface reveals the little olive mayflies with their sailboat-wings taxying for takeoff.

Once I locate a riser I carefully move into a casting position that affords me a natural drag-free drift. I try to avoid dropping my leader or line on any unnecessary crossing surface currents. Using a size 18 imitation on a 6X leader, I try to drop my fly about two feet above the trout so it falls in the same line of drift in which he is feeding. Frequently the first cast does the job.

Midges

The little Chironomid midges can also afford good surface action for winter trout. For example, I recently took a beginning angler out in the middle of the winter, and the trout were sipping on the surface. I confidently told my friend to tie on a Beatis Parachute and work the pod of trout above him. It wasn't until both of us were still fishless a half-hour later that I checked the stream's surface. There was not an olive present. The water was covered with little Chironomid midges and the trout were taking them aggressively. By switching over to a midge imitation we had outstanding action.

If you don't see rising trout, you should still carefully peruse the water, but now you should peer beneath the surface. Many large brown trout move out into selected areas to feed on cress bugs and shrimp. I usually spot these trout by noticing the surface disturbance they cause with their tails as they feed along the bottom, or by observing the discolored water trailing downstream below them as they "root out" their meals.

Many of these trout feed in water from six inches to two feet deep, so they are exceedingly wary. Your approach needs to be cautious and the presentation has to be precisely accurate. Even when you refine these two aspects of the game, you may get only one cast to a trout, but the size of these fish and the challenges they afford justify the effort.

Effective technique

My most effective technique goes like this. Once I locate a cress bug feeder I move carefully into a casting position that lets me accurately deliver my fly on the first cast. I kneel there motionless as I evaluate the specific fish's feeding rhythm. Usually the trout holds on his feeding station several minutes. Then he moves upstream a foot or two and dislodges the cress bugs and shrimp from the aquatic grass by swinging the forward portion of his body from side to side for a few seconds. He drops back to his feeding station and gobbles in the insects as the currents push them downstream to him.

On the trout's next trip forward I carefully measure my cast so I can drop my Cress Bug just above his feeding station on his next jaunt. I mark the length of this measuring cast by making a loop with the fly line around the second finger of the rod hand. Now I'm ready!

Just as my trout completes his next cress bug rooting spree and drops back on his feeding station, I deliver my cast about a foot above him. I watch him closely for any sign of a take– such as a turn of the body or a flash of white as he opens his mouth. Instantly I set the hook.

Sure, sometimes he's taking a natural, but that's just the way it goes. I've learned to strike only with my line hand under these circumstances. This causes little disturbance, and if my fish were actually taking a real cress bug, I can frequently get a second shot at him. This may sound like a lot of fuss to make over a trout or two, but many winter trout anglers look at cress bug feeders as the ultimate goal for the challenge they afford in these one-on-one contests. The gratification one realizes on outsmarting a specific fish after repeated confrontations over hours, days and even weeks elevates angling to a special plain.

My favorite Cress Bug pattern is the one developed years ago by Ed Shenk, using a flat body design of muskrat fur in sizes 14, 16 and 18.

If no trout are revealing their presence by feeding on the surface or taking cress bugs or shrimp in the shallows, winter anglers can often make good catches with larger nymphs such as Dragonfly and Damselfly nymphs.

My main efforts are now in identifying good feeding areas that provide protection to the trout while still delivering a reasonable amount of drifting food. I think of these hotspots as having the trout's bedroom close to his dining room.

Undercut banks provide these needs quite nicely. To fish these areas I move in from below to a spot that lets me cast my size 10 Damselfly Nymph to a spot upstream of the undercut bank into a current that pulls it back under the bank as it drifts naturally back to me. I carefully strip in the returning fly line with my line hand so I have a tight line all the way down to my nymph. This lets me watch my indicators for the slightest hint of a strike. I usually position one indicator about three feet above the nymph and a second one about two feet above that one. Not only does this arrangement quickly alert me when the trout picks up my

WINTER TROUT TACTICS

nymph, but I can easily ascertain if my nymph is down where I want it by watching the two indicators.

For example, if I estimate the run I'm fishing is four feet deep and I see my bottom indicator drifting just beneath the surface, I know my nymph is not deep enough. I know I must either slow the rate of my retrieve or add extra lead to the nymph or leader.

Caution: Because of the wary nature of winter trout, you might be tempted to fish a long line. This is fine in some dry fly situations, but when tried with nymphs, strike detection can be a problem. The more mixed currents there are between you and your nymph, the greater the chance of slack developing in your line or leader, letting the trout pick up your nymph and drop it without your having any idea of the take.

Obviously, the closer you get to a trout, the better control you have. However, moving in too tight may spook your fish. The solution? Move slowly, stay low and hide behind any bank cover available–and don't wear your bright fluorescent-orange hunting hat.

Streamers

A second ploy that's effective during the winter, when you don't see feeding trout, is to search the undercut banks and deep runs beside the aquatic grass beds with streamers. The two most productive flies I've found are Shenk's Black Sculpin and Murray's Olive Strymph both in sizes 8 and 10. I use three different streamer techniques during the winter. The specific method depends on the fish's anticipated location and the side of the stream I happen to be on.

If there is a deep undercut beneath the far bank, I often fish it by positioning myself slightly upstream of it, casting my streamer to a spot just above it so the streamer sinks into the trout's hole. I use a very slow line-hand stripping action as I swim the fly right along the stream bottom. By making each successive cast slightly downstream of the previous one, I can effectively show my streamer to any trout there. It might be too smart for me, but at least I'm confident that it'll see my offerings.

Now, if the deeply undercut bank happens to be on my bank, I use a technique I call the "back-up drift." It goes like this. Standing about 15 feet upstream of my target and about three feet back from the bank, I cast my streamer about three feet upstream of the beginning of the deep cut. As the current pulls tightly against my fly, I gradually drop my rod tip and feed line through the guides. This permits the current to pull the streamer into the deep recesses under the bank. Here a slow, methodical jig-drift-jig action can bring some jolting strikes from huge trout. It is imperative that you use a very cautious approach and casting motion with this technique because the trout are looking straight upstream in your direction.

If there are deep cuts in midstream around the grass beds, I use a "bounce retrieve." I cast upstream above my anticipated holding station, allow the streamer to sink to the bottom and slowly bounce it along the depths by lifting and dropping my rod tip in a swinging motion about every three feet of the drift. This tantalizing fly manipulation often prompts strikes from trout that are totally unresponsive to other tactics.

Your tackle for winter trout fishing should be selected carefully only after reflecting on the potential needs.

To get the delicate presentations with small flies and effectively swim the larger streamers, I use a nine-foot graphite rod with a sensitive tip and a strong butt section that balances with a 4-weight fly line. A durable reel with a very light starting drag may easily save you a number of large trout that numb fingers could otherwise lose.

Any trout stream that possesses good spring flows during the winter can provide productive winter angling. Three excellent examples are Big Spring and the Letort in Cumberland County and Falling Springs Run in Franklin County.

The beauty of a winter trout stream, the rewarding solitude, and especially the cooperative trout provide you with an abundance of stimulating experience. Try it!

THE BEAUTY OF A WINTER TROUT STREAM, THE REWARDING SOLITUDE, AND ESPECIALLY THE COOPERATIVE TROUT PROVIDE YOU WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF STIMULATING EXPERIENCE.

photo -Harry W. Murray

The Mickey Finn

by Chauncy K. Lively
photos by the author



Most fly fishermen carry a supply of streamer flies to round out their all-purpose kits, recognizing that there are times when trout abandon their feeding on insects to pursue minnows in shallow water. There's no question baitfish offer a substantial bite for large trout. Then there are times when the water is discolored and something more visible than wets and dries is required to draw strikes.

American streamer flies appear to have evolved from Theodore Gordon's Bumblepuppy, the first known baitfish representation. The Bumblepuppy sported a chenille body palmered with badger hackle, an underwing of deer hair and both tails and top wing of goose quill sections. It was long and slim, and when drawn through the water in short spurts it had the appearance of a minnow in flight. Gordon is said to have caught many large trout, as well as pike, bass and other gamefish, with his new fly, and word soon got around.

It wasn't long before fly tiers were expressing their own ideas about minnow-type flies. Two styles, representing two separate schools of thought, eventually emerged. In Maine Alonzo Bacon whipped long chicken feathers to a bare hook and named it "Rooster's Regret." To meticulous fly tiers it was a crude fly, but the squaretails and landlocked salmon of northern Maine's streams and ponds held it in high regard. The feather-wing design was refined by such tiers as Bill Edson, Herb Welch and Carrie Stevens, and it became known as a "streamer" or "streamer fly."

Meanwhile, a different approach was taken by other tiers, who used hair as material for the long, slim wings. Their flies became known as "bucktails," and for many years the two styles of minnow-like flies were regarded separately. However, in recent years the term *bucktail* has been abandoned, and all flies fitting the baitfish category are now called streamers. That's fortunate because streamer design has taken off again in many new directions, with such flies as the Zonker series with mylar tubing bodies and fur-strip wings, flies with epoxy bodies, all-synthetic flies and many more.

The Mickey Finn was popularized by the late John Alden Knight, of Williamsport, who fished it for both trout and bass. Carrying a yellow hair wing with a red stripe and a flashy silver body, it is a very visible fly that shows up well in cloudy water.

Hair for the Mickey Finn's wing should be selected from dyed bucktail, not deer body hair. The latter hair is thick, hollow and tends to flare when thread pressure is applied, a characteristic that makes it ideal for floating bass bugs but less than desirable for streamers. The fine hair found at the tips of the bucktail is the best choice. Often the butt end of the bucktail contains hair from the animal's rump that is too course for streamer wings.

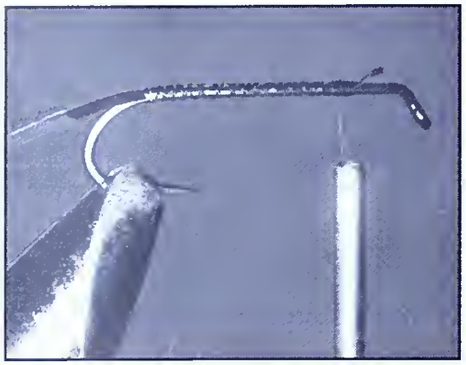
The wing of the Mickey Finn is built up in three separate parts: A yellow underwing and red mid-stripe, each of which should be sparse in density, and a yellow tip wing of greater thickness. Tying in the hair for multi-wing streamers can often produce more bulk than is desirable. To minimize bulk, bevel-cut each bunch of hair about 1/8-inch longer than the effective wing length. Tie in with two strong turns and apply lacquer to the short, exposed butts. Then continue winding over the exposed butts. As each successive bunch is tied in, make the initial turns slightly forward of the beginning turns of the previous bunch. After all bunches are in place, no trimming of hair butts is required and bulk is minimal.

Streamer eyes are generally optional with most fly tiers, but there are those who insist they contribute much to the fly's effectiveness. Painted eyes are easy to make and add little to tying time. Paint of two contrasting colors is applied by dowels of different diameters. I use two tapered, round toothpicks, each cut at a point along its length to give me the diameters required. The end of the larger is dipped into the paler of the two paints and pressed against the fly's head. After it has dried, the darker pupil is applied with the smaller toothpick. Once the eyes are finished, their durability is enhanced by applying a coat or two of clear lacquer to the head.

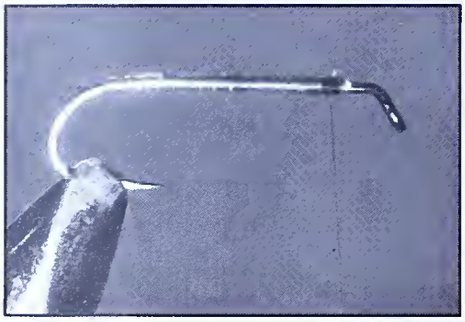
Dressing: Mickey Finn

Hook: Size 10 to 14, 3X long.
Thread: 6/0 black prewaxed for sizes 10 to 8; 3/0 for larger sizes.
Body: Medium silver mylar tinsel, flat.
Wing: One layer each, yellow, red and yellow dyed bucktail hair.

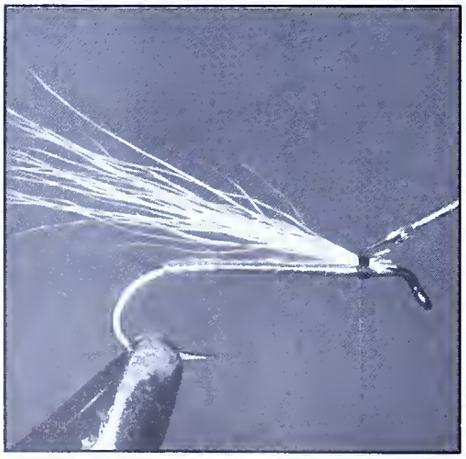
The Mickey Finn



1 Tie in the thread about 3/16-inch behind the eye. Lay the tinsel along the top of the shank, gold side up, and bind it to the shank in close turns, back to the bend. Then return the thread to the original tie-in. Cut off the excess end of the tinsel.



2 Wind the tinsel, silver side up, with close but not overlapping turns and tie if off at the front end. Trim the excess tinsel.



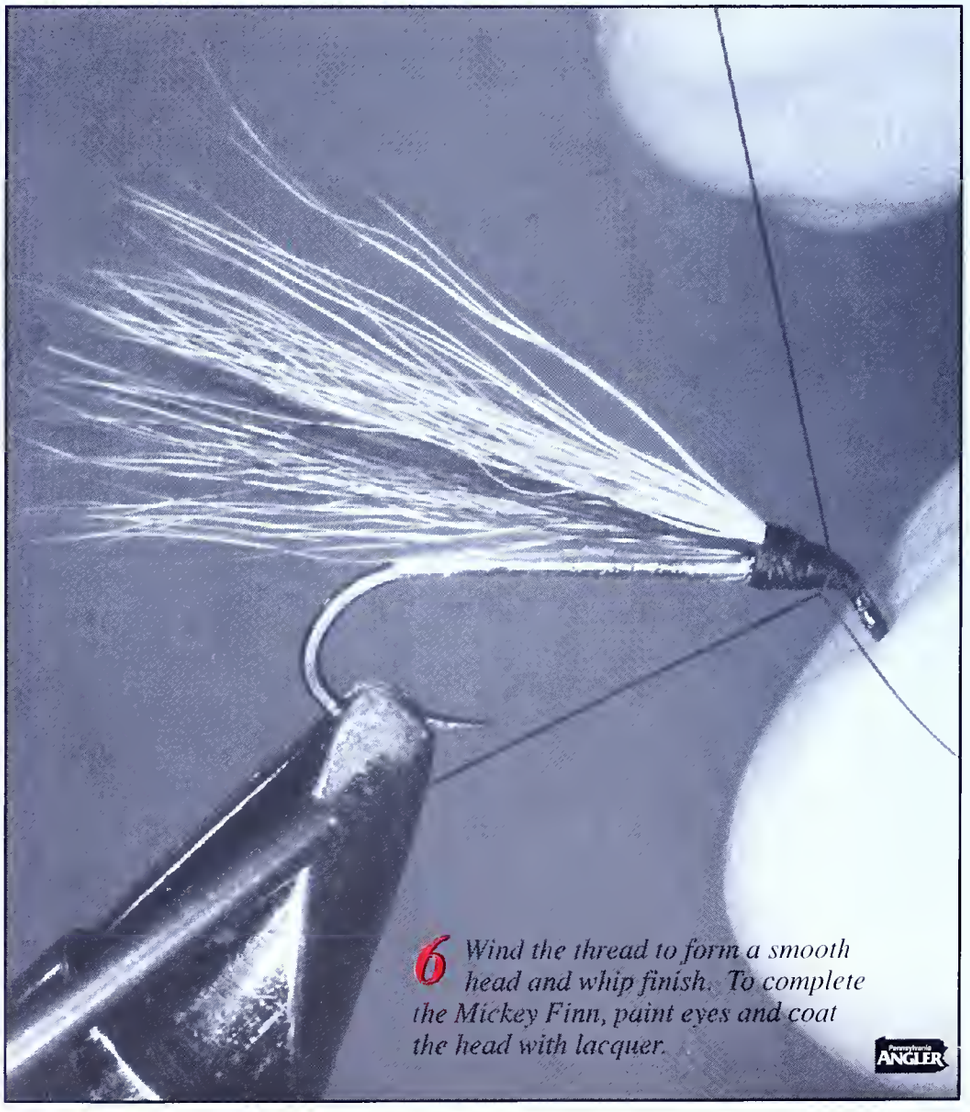
3 Cut a moderately sparse bunch of yellow hair, but twice the shank length, trim the butt end to a bevel (diagonal cut), and tie it in with two firm turns, exposing 1/8-inch of the butts. Apply lacquer to the butts and complete the winding over the butts.



4 Cut a bunch of red hair similar in density but slightly shorter than the hair bunch in step 3. Again, bevel the butt end and dress as in step 3.



5 Cut another bunch of yellow hair of similar length but denser than the first bunch, and follow the dressing of step 3.



6 Wind the thread to form a smooth head and whip finish. To complete the Mickey Finn, paint eyes and coat the head with lacquer.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

Where, When and How Anglers Catch Them

by Dan Tredinnick



photo-Doug Stamm

The long, whirring sentence–composed of line leaving your reel–was punctuated finally by a satisfying plop. For a moment, the only action was silent ringlets rippling, expanding across the lake surface. Then–with a twitch and a gurgling jerk–the lure staggered to life, wandering drunkenly past the lily pads. There was no warning before the lake boiled to life and there was no time to think. The plug disappeared and the reel sang again, this time with a high-pitched scream...

What largemouth bass angler hasn't had this dream? Fortunately, the fertile waters of Pennsylvania provide us with ample opportunity to make that dream catch reality.

In fact, last year alone 161 anglers landed trophy largemouths and earned an Angler Award from the Fish and Boat Commission. To do so, the hawgs had to weigh over 5 pounds for senior anglers and more than 4 pounds for juniors.

A study of those catches might provide you with a clue to catching your dream largemouth.

Where

Trophy largemouth bass can be found across the state. Last year's largest fish–a 9-pound, 11-ounce beauty–came from western Pennsylvania: Donegal Lake in Westmoreland County. The second largest fish came from the southcentral: Waynesboro Reservoir in Franklin County. That fish measured in at 9 pounds, 8 ounces.

The third largest fish (9 pounds) was a product of Stevens Lake, Wyoming County in northeastern PA. Clearfield County, in the Commonwealth's northcentral tier, offered up the fourth largest fish. That Susquehanna monster tipped the scales at 8 pounds, 9 ounces.

Despite the availability of trophy largemouths in every region, two individual waterways were the undisputed kings in 1993. Lake Arthur in Butler County, a longtime hotspot, was again top dog, producing 27 award-sized bass. Lake Wilhelm, Mercer County, followed with 16 trophy largemouths.

Other top producers: Shohola Lake, Pike County; Minsi Lake, Northampton County; Ontelaunee Reservoir, Berks County; Memorial Lake, Lebanon County; and Crooked Creek Lake, Armstrong County.

How

Among the top 10 catches, the choice of lures was evenly divided. Five fish fell prey to natural bait while five others hit artificials.

Overall, live bait was the choice of trophy anglers. The single most popular live baits were minnows and shiners–accounting for 57 awards. Nightcrawlers produced 13 catches.

Among artificials, spinnerbaits were most popular, producing 18 fish. Artificial worms were the choice for 10 winning anglers.

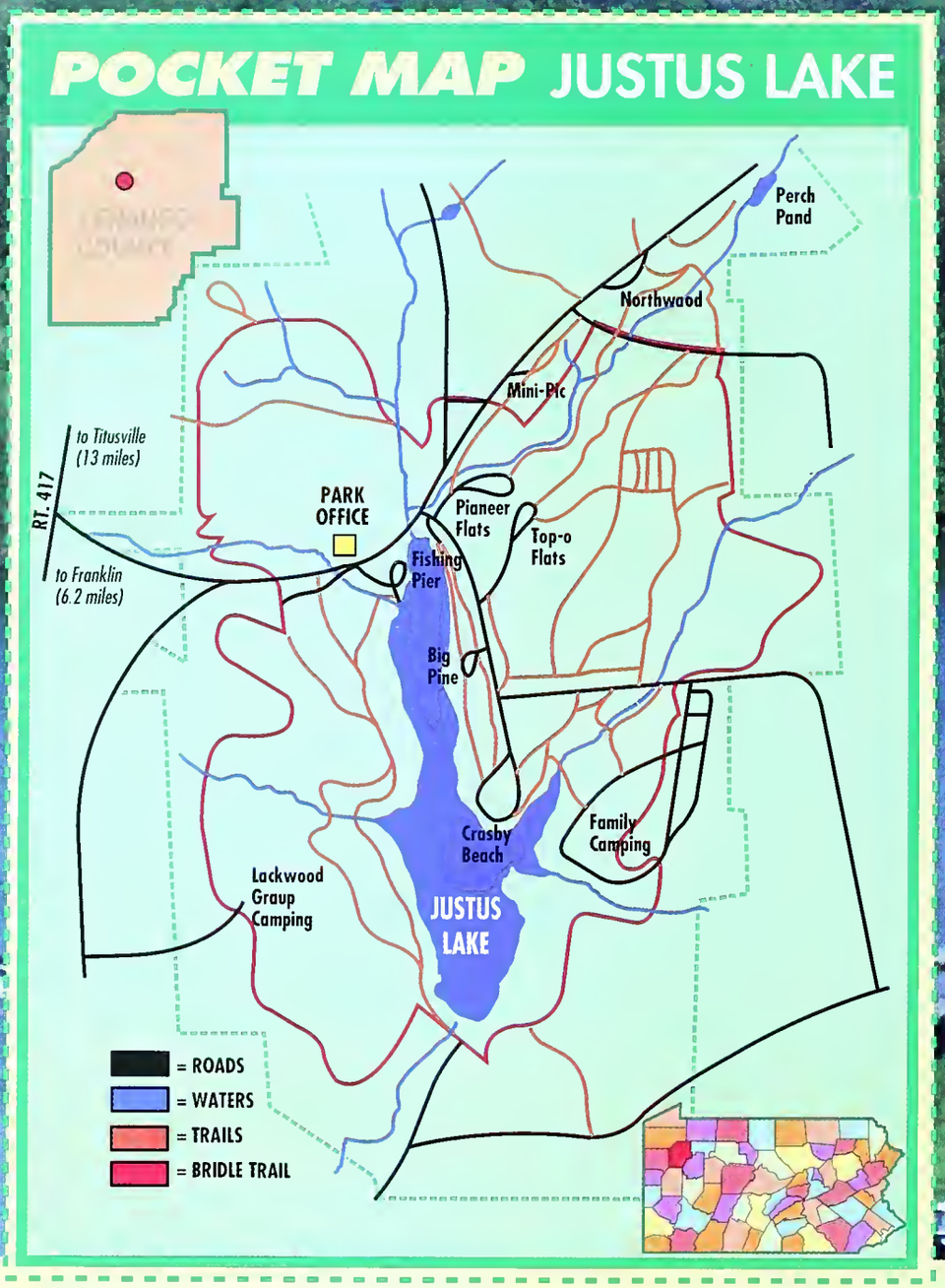
When

Want big bass? Think cold. In 1993, three of the top 10 largemouths were caught in February. In fact, the shortest month produced the most award-sized largemouths, 30, to be exact.

January and March were big producers, too, with 13 and 18 trophies, respectively, earned then. Those three months combined offered up 61 citations, about 38 percent of the total awards conferred.

Much occurred in July, too. Two of the top 10 fish were surrendered then, with 28 awards total. June was another popular month with 23 citations earned then.

The current state record largemouth is 11 pounds, 3 ounces, a mark that has stood since 1983. But who knows–maybe you'll catch that dream fish!



PERFECT PARK

If there were a contest for the most perfect outdoor recreation park in the state, Two Mile Run County Park would definitely be a contender. Established in 1968, today the 2,695-acre park provides an outstanding array of true recreational opportunities. Facilities have been gradually added over the years, but everything, regardless of age, has been maintained.

Besides fishing and boating on Justus Lake, there is an excellent swim beach complete with diving platform and sand volleyball courts. Adjacent to the beach area are picnic pavilions. Canoes, paddle boats, row boats and aqua cycles are available for rental during the summer season. Some rowboats are even registered for use with electric motors—bring your own motor and battery.

There is a handicapped fishing pier on the north end of the lake. Much of the park is forested, with hiking trails and a bridle trail clearly marked.

A family campground offers 50 sites. Over half have electric hookups. A separate group camping area can accommodate youth organizations.

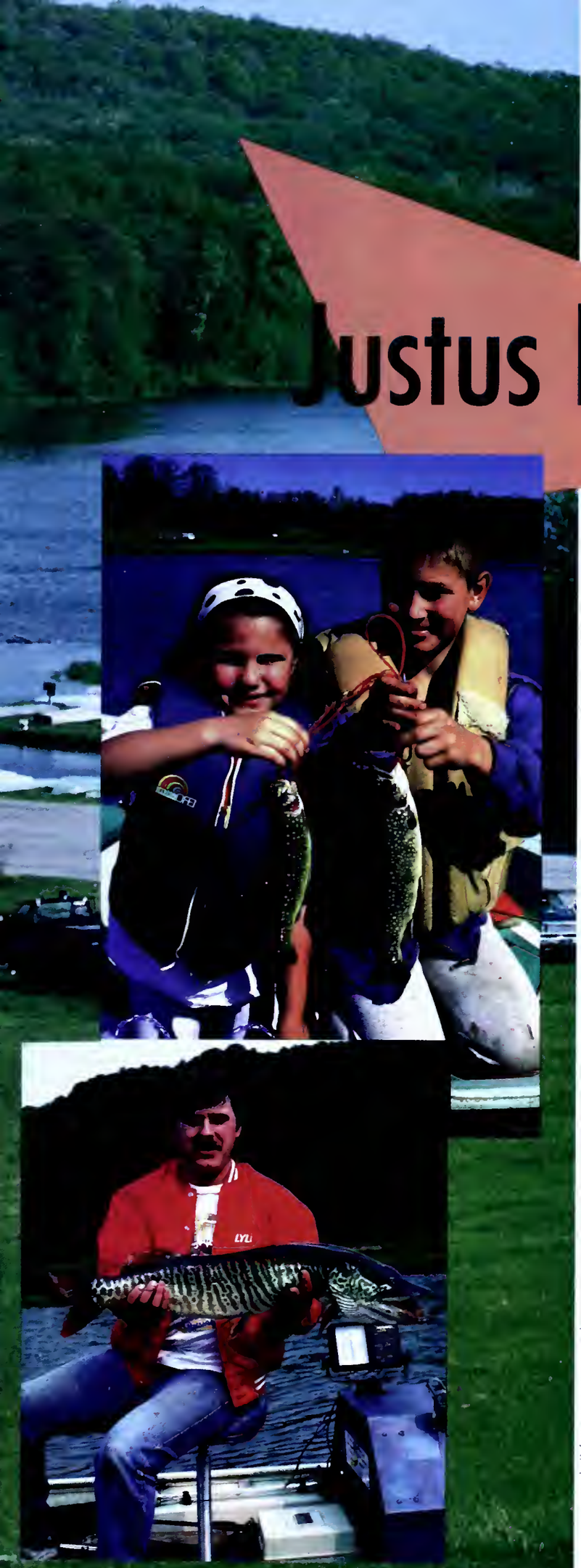
Hunting is permitted throughout the park (except designated safety zones) according to the seasons and regulations set by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Hunters are advised to be extremely cautious because other activities continue during hunting season.

Wintertime activities at Two Mile include ice fishing, ice skating, sled riding, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. There are separate snowmobile trails and cross-county ski trails. Ski equipment rentals are available at the recreation center.

Two Mile Run County Park offers genuine outdoor opportunities with a strong sense of environmental awarness. Hats off to the planners, developers, and Park & Recreation Board for an extremely well-thought out, well-maintained, well-managed county park. In a time of cutbacks, special user fees, and heavy-handed nonsense restrictions, Two Mile County Park is a beacon of hope for what an outdoor recreation public park should be. And the fishing isn't bad, either!–*DB*.

Justus Lake DOUBLE-UP

by Darl Black



photos: Darl Black, map graphic: Ted Walke

"Double your pleasure, double your fun..." That line from the famous chewing gum advertisement easily applies to Justus Lake. Justus is a two-story fishery capable of supporting warmwater/coolwater and coldwater fish species. Whatever your tastes in fishing—from trout to muskies to bass—you'll find them at Justus Lake.

But where do you find Justus Lake? You'll need to look hard at a road map to find this dot of blue in northwest Pennsylvania. At only 144 acres, this small reservoir in Venango County is easily overlooked. Justus Lake was impounded during the 1970s as part of Two Mile Run County Park complex. It is located six miles north of Franklin off Route 417.

Nestled in a wooded valley, the picturesque lake is fed by springs and mountain streams, including Two Mile Run. The northern arm of the lake features a large, shallow flat rich with aquatic vegetation. Moving southward, the depth gradually increases. Farther down the lake are three bays, each fed by a cool brook. The deepest water near the dam is approximately 60 feet. Over the years, habitat projects have included building timber cribs on the flats and sinking brushpiles. Some shoreline trees have also been felled to increase shallow cover.

Boats are limited to wind-powered, hand-powered or electric motors only. However, gas outboards may remain on the boat. A single launch area on the north end of the lake is open to the public free of charge. Standard inland water fishing regulations apply on Justus Lake.

Two-story story

Just what is meant by a "two-story fishery"? First, one must understand what is a warmwater fish, coolwater fish and coldwater fish.

One approach fishery biologists use to categorize different fish species is by temperature preference. A water temperature of 70 degrees is recognized as the dividing line separating coldwater fishes from warmwater fishes. Preferring water temperatures close to 60 degrees, trout and salmon fall into the coldwater category. Species that handle water temperatures in the high 70s and low 80s—such as catfish species and most members of the sunfish family (which includes largemouth bass)—are referred to as warmwater species. The term "coolwater" is applied to species that bridge the gap between coldwater and warmwater categories, preferring temperatures from 65 to 75

Justus Lake DOUBLE-UP

degrees. Coolwater species are the perch and pike families, plus some members of the sunfish family, such as smallmouth bass, rock bass and redbreast sunfish.

Through the spring and summer, most deep lakes warm and stratify. A thermal barrier, known as a thermocline, is formed because there is no exchange of water between the warmer upper layer (epilimnion) and the colder lower layer (hypolimnion). Technically, the thermocline is defined as the area where the temperature drops one degree Celsius for one meter of depth of water. The exact depth varies from lake to lake, but normally the thermocline sets up somewhere between 15 and 30 feet deep. Except for unusual circumstances, layers do not mix until the surface water cools in the fall.

When initially separated by the establishment of the thermocline, the lower layer contains dissolved oxygen. However, if the lake is fertile (lots of organic matter), deepwater oxygen may be quickly used up through organic matter decay. In that case, fish are unable to survive the summer in the coldwater layer. However, if the bottom is relatively infertile or there is a source of oxygenated spring water entering the hypolimnion, then coldwater species may live below the thermocline.

Justus Lake is one of those rare lakes in Pennsylvania that maintains sufficient dissolved oxygen below the thermocline through the summer to support coldwater species. As the temperature in the shallows increases in the late spring because of more direct sun rays and runoff, trout seek cooler water temperatures by going deep. Meanwhile, warmwater species have a heyday during the summer in the shallower water, while coolwater species hold at moderate depths. Hence, the two-story fishery—trout below the thermocline and warmwater/coolwater species above.

Coldwater fishery

Denny Wessell is an avid trout angler who has fished Justus Lake since it was impounded. He believes that Justus Lake is one of the best trout lakes in the state, pointing to brown trout up to 32 inches and brook trout to 20 inches–this despite the fact that Justus Lake is not on the Commission list of approved trout water.

The lake is stocked every year in the spring and fall with catchable rainbows, browns and brookies, but there are plenty of holdover trout for year-round angling, too.

According to Wessell, during the early part of the spring trout season, the fish are taken on the standard array of trout baits, including minnows, worms and maggots. A 1/8-ounce or 1/4-ounce spoon in silver or gold is Wessell's favorite artificial in April.

"When hatches start coming off the lake in May, the best all-around flies are a size 14 Mosquito for a dry fly pattern and a Dark Pheasant Tail for a nymph pattern," says Wessell. "An exact 'match the hatch' is not necessary on Justus. As long as it is black, the fish take it. Even ratty old flies do the trick."



photo-Earl Black

The best area continues to be the shallow flats on the north end. Fish are caught there from shore as well as from boats and float tubes.

"Trout remain in the shallows until the water temperature reaches 63 to 65 degrees around the first week in June," Wessell says. "Then the trout move deep, to around 30 feet where the water temperature is 57 to 58 degrees. However, some surface-feeding trout can still be taken in the morning and evenings during the drake hatches in June."

Wessell's guesstimate about the summer depth of trout is right on the money according to surveys done by Commission Area Fisheries Manager (AFM) Ron Lee.

"We set nets at the depths where the dissolved oxygen meter and temperature meter indicate trout should be, and we catch trout," says Lee. "Our nets were set between 35 and 40 feet. The thermocline was around 20 feet. Although the lake is about 60 feet deep, the deepest water has an oxygen deficit—trout could not survive."

During the summer, Wessell usually gives Justus trout a rest. However, he says fish can be taken with live bait. He recommends a thin no-stretch line, extremely sharp hooks, and a heavy weight. Small, two-inch minnows are used as bait. The technique is to slow-troll the minnow in 25 to 30 feet of water where suspended fish are observed on a depthfinder.

"In early September, the lake undergoes the first of three turnovers," says Wessell. "The first one is easy to recognize because the water gets a green color to it. At this point, trout start to run into the flats again, particularly around the mouths of feeder creeks. They move to the creek mouths in the morning, then return to the main submerged creek channel in the center of the flat to spend midday. On dark, rainy days, the trout stay shallow all day. That's a good axiom for Justus: The worst weather is the best trout fishing."

Wessell points out that some trout run the tributary streams in the fall, while others attempt to spawn in the lake, usually around spring holes in the upper flats.

Wessell continues to fish open water for trout through October, November and December. Then when the lake freezes, he breaks out the tip-ups.

"On the ice the best time is early morning, from one hour before sunrise to two hours after," Wessell says. "Set up on a point, sand bar, or near the mouth of a stream. The best bait is a one-inch to two-inch Erie emerald shiner hooked in the middle of the back."

According to Wessell, set the line so the bait is only one foot under the ice. The shallow set is used because trout roam in a circular pattern just under the ice seeking weak and injured minnows, or any winter fly hatch that may occur.

Bass factory

That axiom about good fishing in bad weather holds true for all species at Justus. The water is exceptionally clear most of the time, and all gamefish are sight-oriented in their feeding. It also means they are very wary of unnatural lure offerings. Trout and bass fishermen both recommend light lines and finesse presentations.

A bass angler who cut his teeth on Justus Lake is Lee Duer. For five years, Duer owned a local business and fished Justus Lake every available minute. Today, living some distance away, he still visits the lake several times a year.

"The lake has never been a good spinnerbait lake or good for any kind of reaction lure because the water is very clear and cover is minimal," says Duer. "It's always been a good lake for more natural presentations, like a grub and four-inch worm."

What continues to surprise Duer is the number of largemouth bass in this ultra-clear, marginally fertile lake. Although the lake has a reputation for numbers of bass, the bass run small. On a 1994 summer trip, Duer and a fishing partner caught and released 101 largemouths in seven hours of fishing. Only six of those fish were over 12 inches.

However, Duer knows there are large bass in the lake. The largest bass he is aware of taken from the lake weighed over seven pounds. During the spawn he observed a bass estimated close to eight pounds. But he wonders why an apparent healthy population of bass cannot produce more big fish for Justus.

The most recent electrofishing survey undertaken by AFM Ron Lee yielded 141 bass, of which 21 were over 12 inches, 10 over 14 inches and two greater than 20 inches. Electrofishing shows a developing smallmouth fishery in the lake, too.

"When bass season opens in June, the fish are still on the soft stickbait bite," Duer says. "A four-inch Slug-Go twitched across the surface makes for exciting topwater action. The bass are relating to the vegetation and cribs on the north flats, as well as any piece of shoreline cover up and down the lake. They see a minnow shape struggling on the surface and chase it down, figuring it is injured.

"But by July most adult bass have moved into deeper water and are less likely to come up for surface presentations during the day, even though the lake is clear," says Duer. "Catching bass in daylight during the summer means fishing small soft-plastic baits in natural colors on 8-pound-test line around stumps in 12 to 20 feet of water. Floppy-tail grubs on lightweight jigheads and splitshotting are the best techniques."

But big bass are extremely difficult for the average angler to catch. If you want to catch bass over two pounds, Duer recommends night fishing. After dark it is possible to catch them on a variety of lures including topwater prop baits, crankbaits and jig-and-pig.

Duer goes on to explain, with a smile, about the great Justus Lake "salamander bite" in the fall. He refers to this as a non-fact pattern.

"The bass move shallow to feed in early October, usually into six to eight feet deep. At this same time there is a newt migration occurring in the shallow waters of the lake. Someone started using four-inch plastic salamanders to imitate the large numbers of newts seen the shallows, and these fishermen started catching bass. Suddenly, this became the great fall salamander bite. Ironically, bass do not eat newts because the critters leave a bad taste in the mouth. At least bass don't eat them a second time! Bass are hitting the plastic lizards, but not because they believe it to be a salamander."

Duer is confident that Justus Lake bass eat small trout anytime they inhabit the same water depths. Wessell blames the failure of a fingerling rainbow trout program on bass. Trout are simply too tempting a target for larger predators.

Walleyes, muskies

The coolwater species are represented in Justus Lake by hybrid muskies and walleyes. Unlike the bass, which are self-sustaining, the hybrids are stocked as 5-inch to 6-inch fingerlings and the walleyes are stocked as fry.

Many anglers believe the musky hybrids of Justus are the most beautiful fish of this species found anywhere. The very bright, colorful, distinctive markings are attributed to the clear water. The nickname "tiger" is apparent—partly because of the ferocious fight they put up, but also because of the tiger-like vertical bars on the body.

Wessell and Duer agree that muskies include quite a few trout in their diet. Perhaps even more since the yellow perch population collapsed a few years ago. Both anglers have caught trout that were definitely attacked by a large, toothy critter.

Wessell goes as far to suggest the best musky bait at Justus is a legally caught live trout. He believes it doesn't take long for a musky to figure out that a soft-rayed trout goes down a lot easier than a spiny-rayed perch.

Beyond live trout, topwater surface baits and jerkbaits are the best musky getters. Fishermen working a Zara Spook for bass are just as likely to have a strike from a tiger.

Walleyes are an entirely different matter. A few anglers who have figured out the Justus Lake walleyes deny the fish are even in the lake. Others shyly insist the walleyes are too hard to catch in the clear water. However, there are individuals scoring on big Justus walleyes—fish in the five-pound to eight-pound category.

A common story about walleye catches floating around Justus is that the fish are taken by trolling worm harnesses in 25 to 30 feet of water during the day. That probably is a smoke screen. First, that would put the walleyes in the cold water below the thermocline—possible, but unlikely. Second, if the big fish were taken on worm harnesses in daylight, everybody would be catching them.

More than likely the big walleyes are coming at night on large shallow-running minnow crankbaits trolled on a long line over deep water. It is a tactic that has proven effective on many clear-water impoundments.

Justus Lake may never claim a title as a trophy fish lake, but it certainly does offer diversified fishing opportunities.

Supper's on the Table

by Jim Bashline

Andy Rupp wasn't sure why he was going fishing tonight. His legs ached and he knew he'd have to tie another tippet onto his tattered leader. To a younger fly fisherman this would not be a problem, but Andy was 81 and his bifocal glasses were almost seven. The blood knot that used to be tied automatically was only slightly less difficult than tying on a new fly.

"Foolish old man," he thought to himself, "you just don't know any better. You have to go fishing. Should be good tonight. There's a soft west wind blowing and the light cahills should be on the water about seven o'clock. It's the 21st of May...or is it the 22nd?"

He had difficulty seeing the date on the calendar across the small room that doubled as kitchen and den in his three-room bungalow. Of course, Andy would go fishing. For 65 years he had seldom missed an evening on his beloved Otter Creek. He loved it, took good care of it, and the creek returned his kindness by providing good fishing and companionship.

Andy Rupp had been a widower for 25 years. His only son had been killed in Vietnam and all other relatives were dead or relocated, he was no longer sure where. The small town of Crossman Station had been his home since he was a teenager. His father had owned the town's only hardware store and Andy had worked there all his life, first as a clerk and later as the store's owner. It wasn't a prosperous store by modern standards, but it supported his small family and it allowed him time to fish every evening.

His wife had died in 1967 and five years later he sold the store to a young couple on a contract since the young veteran didn't have much money. Andy lived on a small payment each month. Actually, the note had been paid up years ago but the store's owner still made a monthly contribution to Andy's well-being. Things like that happen in small towns.

Andy had been a fine husband and a patient father. Now, he was not called on to be either. He was, however, the finest fly fisherman in Brookfield County. Nearly everyone agreed on that. His skill with the fly rod was legendary within a 50-mile radius and before his eyes began to fail he could tie the most exquisite dry flies that ever kissed the water. He had fished a handful of other streams in his part of the world, but Otter Creek was his private laboratory.

The Town Pool was 200 steps from his back porch and for two miles upstream and downstream he knew every pebble, every submerged log and every trout. The stream would change a bit each year after the spring thaw, but the subtle alterations would soon be cataloged in Andy's mind. Sixty-five years is a long time to fish one particular stream, but Andy never tired of it. It was his stream.

The native brook trout that once dominated Otter Creek were scarce these days, but introduced brown trout had adapted well and made the fishing reasonably consistent. Twenty-two inches seemed to be the maximum size for Otter Creek. Andy had taken several that beat the 20-inch mark but 22 inches was his personal record.

With great care he snipped off the ends of the blood knot with a tiny pair of cuticle scissors. He tested the knot with a brisk tug. A size 14 Light Cahill was selected from the fly box on the kitchen table. He used to change flies frequently along the stream, but recently he found it was easier to tie the fly on at home rather than risk dropping it at the edge of the stream. He still tied his own flies, but now they were a major undertaking. Each one was precious.

Hip boots had been discarded three years before because he had taken a bad fall and almost drowned. He had made up his mind to do the remainder of his fishing near the bank. His footwear these days consisted of a pair of bedroom slippers underneath four-buckle galoshes.

As Andy shuffled along the well-worn dirt path that angled across his tiny backyard, neighbor Ira Findley called out, "Going fishing tonight, Andy?"

It was obvious that he was going fishing since he was carrying his rod and was wearing his galoshes. But this was a ritual the two had going for more than 50 years.

"Yup, I'm going fishing again. It's too bad you never learned to fish–it would have kept you out of trouble."

"Well, good luck; see you in the morning!"

Having a cup of coffee with Ira in the morning was a habit they both enjoyed. Ira was always busy with his garden. Waste of time, Andy always thought. Not that he didn't enjoy reaping the benefits of Ira's labor, it was just that fishing was more fun. Over morning coffee Ira always listened to Andy's fishing adventure of the previous night and Andy listened just as patiently to Ira's tales of difficulty with the cutworms that were about to devour his tomato plants. Things like that happen in small towns.

It was 7:30 when Andy reached the Town Pool. It had taken him nearly 10 minutes to walk the path leading to it.

"This may be my last year for fishing," Andy thought as he sat down heavily on the old milking stool he had stashed by the pool. He used to fish several pools during an evening, but now he was satisfied to just sit at the Town Pool and wait for a rising fish. The stool made the waiting easier.



Illustration-Ted Walke

"Caught two nice trout here last night and from the looks of things, there should be a good hatch on tonight.

Got a nice fat 18-incher next to the far bank two weeks ago on a Red Quill...or was that last year? Oh heavens!" He continued to hold the one-man conversation. "I'm really getting old. Can't remember if it was two weeks ago or last year!" As he sat there with his hand holding the grip of the vintage, three-piece bamboo rod, he suddenly was struck by the fact that he was very tired.

"You're tired, too," he told the rod. "You've caught a pile

Supper's on the Table

of trout for me. Let's see now, how old are you? Thirty years, thirty-five? You deserve a rest, too. Maybe next year we'll both hang it up. I'll bet you and I have caught a thousand trout out of this pool. Put almost all of 'em back, too. Save a few for Ira's breakfast two or three times a year. Funny about Ira, he doesn't care much about fishing but he sure does like to eat trout. Sarah liked trout, too, and so did Jerry. But they're gone now. I'm almost gone, too. I wonder if anyone will give Ira a trout or two when I'm no longer here. What was that? I thought I heard a voice calling!"

He stood up and turned toward the cluster of houses that made up the village of Crossman Station, cupping his left hand over his ear.

"Guess it must have been the wind or maybe some kids hollering." He sat down again. "Look at how those trees have grown, will ya? Planted most of those willows myself after the highway boys got done 'improving' this stretch of the creek when they built the new bridge. A man's got to take care of his stream...nobody else will."

Andy had planted willows and built a dozen rock-wing dams over the years; most of them survived. He encouraged the local anglers to fish with flies and return most of their catch. But his greatest pride was having taught two generations of youngsters to use the fly rod. Most of them had moved away but a few returned each spring and summer for a weekend of fishing. Things like that happen in small towns.

Andy's reverie was interrupted by a splash on the far side of the pool. It was a sizable brown trout. He had not seen the swirl but the sound indicated a fish of respectable size. A two-minute wait. The fish rose again. A one-minute wait. Another rise...and again. And now, in the slick tail water at the pool's end, another trout kicked up water. At the riffle-speckled nose of the pool, a third trout showed itself. Struggling mayfly duns were beginning to appear in numbers all over the pool. The hatch was on!

Andy had seen this opening act countless times before. It was always exciting. A prickle of anticipation made his eyesight a little sharper and his arms and legs a bit stronger.

Then he heard the voice again. "Someone's calling me. Who in the world would want me this evening?" Andy was puzzled. "I wasn't expecting visitors. And even if I was, the fish are just starting to rise. One of them looks like a nice one."

Andy rose slowly from the stool and unhooked the fly from the keeper ring. A jerk or two on the reel and the old rod began to flex back and forth as line extended for his first cast of the evening.

"Hallooooooo!"

This time there was no mistake. Somebody was calling. Andy's first cast was just about to be released, so he didn't turn around. The slack line coasted through his hand. He watched the fly touch the water, then answered without turning his head.

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Dad. Mom says supper is just about ready. About five minutes and we're having your favorite...scalloped potatoes and ham." Just then the big trout sucked in the fly.

"What in the world is happening! Jerry has been dead for over 25 years and how would anyone know that my favorite dinner was scalloped potatoes and h...?"

The big trout made a race for the tail of the pool and the battered single-action reel rasped indignantly. Andy's practiced hand eased up at just the right second to avoid a broken tippet, and the hook-jawed brown suddenly swapped ends and raced for the cover of the willow roots near the place he had been hooked. Andy caught a glimpse of the fish and knew immediately that it was the largest brown he had ever hooked.

"Boy, that looks like a whale, Dad. Mom will forgive you for being late if you manage to land that one!"

"Great Scott," Andy thought. "Here I've hooked the biggest trout in Otter Creek and some idiot is playing games with me."

He didn't turn around since the critical part of the battle was at hand. The wise old brown was trying to force his way into the maze of willow roots, and Andy was putting on all the pressure the leader would bear. Finally, the trout eased off and grudgingly moved to the center of the pool.

The battle was turning; Andy now could see the fish quite clearly. It was a full two feet long.

Andy backed up cautiously, leading the giant fish into the shallows. The trout made one last effort to hang in the deeper water and suddenly the fight left him. One more gentle stroke of the rod tip and the great, black-spotted fish was beached on a tiny sand bar.

Exhausted, Andy sat down beside the fish and touched its broad side with a trembling hand. It was his biggest trout...ever! Should he kill this fish and accept the accolades that would go with it or release it?

"Might as well let him go, Dad. I saw you catch him and that's all that matters. Come on now, Mom is holding supper and besides you can come back after you eat, if you want to. I'll come with you."

Andy slowly turned his head and stared straight at the figure that stood beside him. It was his son. He was just as Andy had last seen him. Half grown out crew cut with the proud, erect posture of a kid just out of basic training. He was wearing his favorite pair of soleless moccasins.

Andy grasped the tiny dry fly hook between his thumb and forefinger and twisted the barb loose. Gently he lifted the spent trout and lowered it slowly into the water. The big brown flared its gills widely to gulp in fresh water. Andy relaxed his grip on the tail, and with great dignity the giant trout fanned into the black water, back into Otter Creek.

"Some fish," Andy lamented, "and I was talked into letting him go by my imagination." He looked around. There was no one near him. "Just an old man's rusty brain playing tricks."

"Come on, Dad, supper's on the table and Mom's going to be peeved if you don't hurry up."

There was the voice again and now Andy could see Jerry headed up the path toward the house. It was Jerry and supper was waiting and it will certainly be nice to see Sarah again. And, of course, Jerry was right. Scalloped potatoes and ham were his favorite and even more important, his big trout had been witnessed!

It was Ira who found him there beside Otter Creek the next morning. He was lying peacefully on his side with the Light Cahill between his thumb and forefinger. The imprint of a huge trout was still there in the wet sand.

It was a heart attack, pure and simple, guessed Ira. But he couldn't account for the two sets of footprints in the sand leading away from the creek. One set looked like Andy's old galoshes, all right; the other set appeared to be from leather moccasins. Ira said nothing about this to anyone.

Things like that happen in small towns.

Trailing SHUCKS

by Charles R. Meck



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

Nick Nicklas, originally of Woolrich, Pennsylvania, tied a few dozen Pale Morning Dun dry flies for me a few years back. Nick's one of the finest fly tiers and fly fishers I know. He's an innovative tier, always creating new patterns with new materials. Nick now lives and guides in Montana and he told me these patterns would work well on Eastern waters as well as they do on Western ones. The fly had a cream tail and hackle, pale-gray wings, and a pale-yellow body. After I looked more closely at the pattern I noticed it had a piece of dark-brown material tied under and extending out as long as the tail.

Anglers call that dark-brown piece of material, tied where the tail normally goes, a shuck, or trailing shuck. I had heard and seen these patterns with shucks but had never used them. One successful day on a Western river with that pattern changed my thinking on shucks forever. I tied dozens of Sulphur patterns with shucks in anticipation of the hatch in mid-May on Pennsylvania waters. That first year experimenting with the shucks proved their value beyond doubt. Look at the following fishing trip during a sulphur hatch to see the value of shucks.

Jim Ravasio of Danbury, Connecticut, fished just downriver from me since mid-morning. Shortly after noon, green drakes and sulphurs by the thousands began appearing on this central Pennsylvania river. Both hatches continued for five hours. A cool, overcast late-May afternoon encouraged these evening-emerging mayflies to appear earlier in the day than expected. If you don't believe that fly fishing has increased its number of avid followers, you should fish the Little Juniata River at this time of year. Where just weeks before you'd see one or two anglers, now this same 200-yard stretch held more than 20 fly-rod-toting anglers, all ready to cast a Sulphur or Green Drake pattern at a rising trout. This continuous angling pressure lasts for more than a week.

During this multiple hatch, few anglers take time to watch trout feeding. I noticed that most of the trout in front of Jim and me took the much smaller sulphur dun and pretty much ignored the larger green drake. This often occurs when these two hatches appear simultaneously—trout often opt for the sulphur and ignore the drake. It even happens quite often where the mother of all green drake hatches occurs—on Penns Creek. I already had a Green Drake tied on my 4X tippet, so I sat back and watched for any trout taking this larger fly.

While Jim fished over a half-dozen trout that fed on sulphurs, I worked on a heavy trout feeding on green drake duns.

I watched a heavy trout take one drake after another and continue to refuse my dry fly. I carefully observed the green drakes emerge from their nymphal shucks. These nymphs floated in the sur-

Trailing SHUCKS

face film for several feet. As they drifted near the surface, they wriggled violently and finally the wings of the dun broke through the old nymphal thorax. The violent back-and-forth motion of the nymph continued until the complete dun escaped its old shuck.

I saw several trout take duns still attached to the old nymphal shuck and refuse duns that had already escaped. I saw them actually chase these duns that had the shuck still partially attached.

I had prepared for just this series of events with some attachable shucks I had earlier cut out of old nylon panty hose. I cut narrow strips out of hose, pulled these strips, and they curled in the shape of an old nymphal skin. I had cut some in a tannish gray to match the green drake shuck color and some in dark brown to match the sulphur nymph. I cut the length of each to match the approximate size of the nymph.

I slipped the detachable shuck over the point of the hook and up to the bend of the hook on a Green Drake. Trout had just refused this same imitation without the shuck for the past 10 minutes. On the second cast, that trout hit the Green Drake imitation with that piece of stocking attached.

I landed a 16-inch brown trout and yelled for Jim Ravasio to come upriver. I wanted Jim to take a photo of the trout with the shuck in its mouth. Jim did a double take when he saw the imitation with a shuck. He asked if I had any he could use on his Sulphur pattern, and I handed him a smaller dark-brown shuck and showed him how to place it over the hook.

Jim hurried downriver with his shucked Sulphur pattern and began casting to the still-rising trout that had refused his other pattern. For the next half-hour, each time he caught one of the trout with that shuck, he bellowed upriver to me.

Jim caught five of those six trout that had previously refused his Sulphur dry. Do you believe Jim became an instant convert to the value of shucks?

Tying in the shuck

No, shucks don't always work, but as I often say to many groups I speak to, they're just another tool in your arsenal of tactics to catch trout. I most often attach the shuck when I'm tying the pattern. I add a piece of Z-lon and tie it in where the tail would normally go. I make the Z-lon about the length of the shank of the hook. I then use a permanent marking pen and make the shuck the color of the nymph. You might want to tie some tail fibers on top of the Z-lon. I've found that shucks work especially well during hendrickson, sulphur, blue-winged olive, and green drake hatches.

You'll find some of the color of nymphs in a chart. I wouldn't use shucks during a slate drake hatch. Look at any exposed surface in most northcentral Pennsylvania streams and you'll see plenty of old, black slate drake shucks sticking to them. Slate drake nymphs often swim to an exposed rock, crawl out onto the rock, and emerge out of water.

You can add a shuck in two ways. As I suggested before, if you have patterns that have no shucks, you can add one with a fine piece of panty hose. Make the shuck thin enough to look like the natural. These shucks tatter easily—just replace them when they do.

The other way is to add a piece of Z-lon to the tail when tying the dry fly. I've added a chart (below) of the color of some of the more common nymphs for easy reference.

After I cut a few of the shucks made of panty hose, I took some of them with me on a trip to Pine Creek in northcentral Pennsylvania. For years Pine held a fantastic gray fox population. I enthusiastically looked forward to the hatch appearing on the surface around the third week in May. Large gray foxes would appear sporadically all afternoon. Up and down this 150-foot-wide freestone stream you'd see trout rising for the duns. Pine Creek has lost the gray fox intensity it once had. With the addition of liming devices on Babbs Creek, the hatch intensity on this great northcentral should again increase.

If trout refused the conventional pattern I'd quickly add a dark-brown detachable panty hose shuck and make a couple of casts over risers. Not every trout that refused the conventional pattern took the Gray Fox with the shuck. But enough did to encourage me to continue to try it. All afternoon long



Green Drake pattern with detachable shuck

Trailing Shuck Colors

Hendrickson—Black.
Sulphur—Dark olive brown.
Blue Quill—Dark brown.
Quill Gordon—Black.
Green Drake—Tannish gray.
Yellow Drake—Tannish gray.
White Fly—Grayish tan.
Brown Drake—Tannish gray.
Blue-Winged Olive—Olive black.
Light Cahill—Brownish black.
Slate Drake—Brownish black.
Gray Fox—Dark brown.

photo-Charles R. Meck

gray foxes emerged, trout rose, and I switched from time to time to a shucked pattern.

Bob Sentiwany, of White Haven, fly fishes the Delaware River frequently. Bob had fly fished that great river for the past 20 years. He recently invited me to fish the river with him. We arrived on the river across from Hancock, New York, one late-May afternoon. As we arrived at the river, gray foxes already appeared. With this sporadic mayfly you can sit back and look for big fish feeding on the naturals. Here, too, a Gray Fox with a shuck increased my catch.

Mayfly cycle

To understand why trout strike duns with shucks still attached, it's important to look briefly at a sulphur mayfly life cycle. Nymphs emerge from eggs in early June and grow. The more they grow, the more times they shed their skins. Scientists call each time they shed their nymphal skin an *instar*. In late May or June of the following year, the nymph has fully developed. Wing pads have become enlarged and darkened on these dark-brownish-olive nymphs. By the time the nymph has fully developed, it has reached a length of 8 to 10mm (comparable to a size 14 or 16 hook). When it's ready to emerge, the nymph swims to the surface and begins the process of becoming a dun.

At the surface it breaks its nymphal skin, or shuck, at the top of the thorax and the dun begins to emerge. This process often occurs in a relatively short time. Some duns have more difficulty in the emergence process than others, and weather affects the metamorphosis considerably. You'll find many duns, especially sulphurs, that stay attached to the nymphal shuck for a long period. Some can't rid themselves of the shuck and die. Anglers call these mayflies "stillborns."

Trout seem to sense that the emerging dun, still attached to the nymphal shuck, is vulnerable and can't quickly escape and tend to strike it readily. Once the dun has escaped from the shuck, it rests on the surface to dry its wings for a millisecond to several seconds. Weather has a tremendous effect on the dun's escape from the surface. On cold, drizzly days, duns have difficulty drying their wings and many never take off.

Trout seem to sense this also and readily take duns. On warm, dry days, duns escape rapidly from the surface and give trout little time to capture them. Just check the hendrickson hatch if you don't believe weather affects it. Often when this hatch appears in late April, it does so under cool overcast conditions. Thousands of duns never make it to the safety of the air in inclement weather. However, change the day a hendrickson appears to one that's warm and dry, and the duns escape rapidly.

Why do shucks work so well? Why, until the last few years haven't we used patterns like these? For years anglers copied two phases of a mayfly's life cycle. They avidly copied the nymph with a wet fly, and the dun and spinner with floating patterns. But until a few years ago, few ever thought of copying emergers and duns with shucks still attached.

Next time you see a hatch and you'd like to make some shucks for patterns to copy the natural, examine the nymphal shuck. If you look closely at the green drake shuck you'll see several heavy black transverse stripes across the back. I use a black permanent marking pen and place stripes on the detachable shuck.

Several years ago while Bryan Meck and I fished on the Missouri River in Montana, I tested a caddis pattern with a trailing shuck. Even though we fished over tremendous caddis hatches, few trout took our conventional fluttering caddis patterns. Not until we switched to a caddis pattern with a trailing shuck did we



Sulphur Comparadun

begin to catch trout. On that trip Bryan caught a 24-inch brown trout on that pattern.

After that trip I tied some cream, tan and green caddis patterns and added trailing shucks. While fishing a tan caddis hatch on the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning one early May afternoon, I became frustrated because I couldn't catch any of the trout rising to downwing naturals. I tied on one of the Tan Caddises with a pale-tan Z-lon shuck and caught four of those rising trout that had earlier refused a fluttering caddis. That caddis pattern with a shuck added has worked throughout the state on many streams and many occasions.

Shucks work well not only with a caddis. They also work well with midge imitations.

Ask Chuck Furimsky of Rockwood in southwestern Pennsylvania whether a Z-lon shuck added to a midge works. I gave him a midge pattern recently that had a white shuck on the end and Chuck out-fished five other anglers fishing with him. Just about every trout that rose for midges in front of Chuck that day took his Dark Gray Midge pattern with a shuck.

Since midge and caddis fly naturals have no tails, adding a Z-lon shuck gives much more buoyancy to these patterns. Rather than letting the pattern ride half upright without the tail, the added shuck makes it ride as your normal mayfly pattern floats.

What type of patterns do I use with a shuck? Until a few years ago I used high-riding heavily hackled Catskill-type patterns almost completely. More recently I've opted for parachute and comparadun patterns. If you look at a mayfly riding on the surface, you'll see that the body rides almost flush to the surface. The high-riding fully hackled Catskill type dry fly rides at an angle with the legs much higher than the tail.

How can you determine whether trout are feeding on the dun, an emerger, or a dun with a trailing shuck? First follow some of the duns floating on the surface. Follow several duns resting on the surface. Did trout take any of them? If trout regularly feed on these surface duns, then try a Sulphur dry fly. Do you see splashing rises during the hatch? This might suggest that trout are chasing nymphs moving toward the surface to emergers in the surface film. Switch then to a nymph or a dry fly with a trailing shuck.

Tie some patterns with Z-lon shucks. Add these shucks to some of your favorite hatches. If you don't have any tied, then cut some nylons and place a good supply in your fly box. Next time you get frustrated during a hatch of sulphurs or hendricksons and every trout seems to refuse your fly, use one tied with a shuck.

photo-Charles R. Meck



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The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine

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compiled by Charlene Seifert

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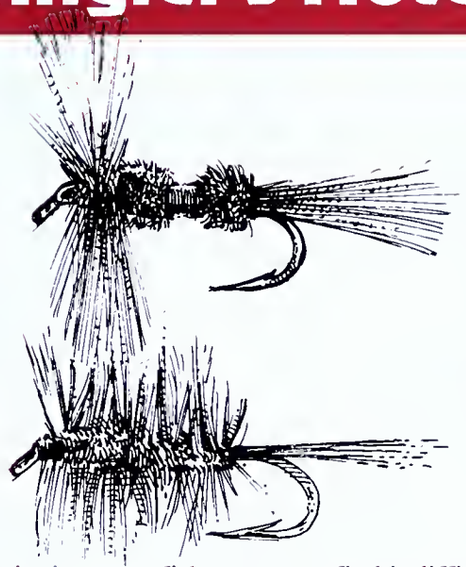
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New State Record Landlocked Lake Striped Bass

Huntingdon angler Robert "Sparky" Price shows off the new state record landlocked lake striped bass he hooked last September 22. The Raystown Lake fish measured 51 inches long with a 40-inch girth and weighed 53 pounds, 12 ouncesshattering the old record of 50 pounds, 8 ounces. The huge striper was caught on live bait and hauled in on 20-pound-test line.



Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Beginning trout fishermen can find it difficult to see tiny dry flies as they float on the water. Try using bushy, white-winged dry flies such as the Royal Wulff, the Renegade, and the Bivisible. These flies are much easier to see, float well, and can be fished as effectively in fast, broken water as they can in a quiet pool.

Bluegills offer excellent winter sport for fishermen using small jigs and flies. Good colors to try are fluorescent orange and red, and the darker, more natural colors. Adding a small grub (the natural, not the plastic imitation) to the jig provides smell and taste and can often improve the fishing.

Some fly fishermen have the habit of applying dry fly flotant to the tippet and leader as well as to the fly. Do not do this. A tippet floating on the water creates a shadow, which can spook selective trout. Apply the flotant to the fly, and then wet the tippet and leader with saliva. This keeps the fly on top of the water, yet allows the tippet and leader to drift just below the surface, eliminating those spooky shadows.

Perhaps the primary reason smallmouth bass prefer rocky points, rip-rap shores, and gravel islands is their fondness for crayfish. Where crayfish are abundant, they are the preferred food of the smallmouth. Seek these areas when searching for this aggressive fighter.

When you catch a big fish, a large trout in a river or a trophy bass from your favorite lake, remember the spot where you caught it. Sooner or later another big fish will move in to that spot to take its place.

When fishing for bass in deep water, whether it is early in the year or late in the fall, you need to be alert for the strike of a sluggish fish. Deep-water bass often pick up a lure very softly, so set the hook at the slightest indication of a strike.

Yellow perch are usually the most active panfish during the winter. They tend to move in schools around river channels and weed beds. If you're ice fishing for them, plan to stay until dark because they become most active toward evening.

When walking through the woods with your fly rod, carry it butt-first, with the tip of the rod pointing behind you. If you angle the rod so the tip is traveling directly behind your back, you eliminate many of those aggravating tree-limb snags. Furthermore, if you were to trip and fall, having the rod pointing behind you can save you from replacing a broken tip.

You might find your crankbaits and wobbling lures running with a better action if you replace the treble hooks with single hooks. Give them a test in the bathtub to judge the action. Using single hooks on these lures can reduce the amount of hang-ups, as well as make it easier to remove the hooks from the fish's mouth.

illustration- Ted Walke

On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

Release Trauma

I recently read a sort of giggling account of fish release written by a general interest columnist who believed "catching a fish and putting it back" was the supreme idiocy of insipid outdoor kooks. While thinking up suitable adjectives for the report, I suddenly realized that putting back a fish probably violates the first law of humanity–keep everything you can get. This is the same formula followed by overstuffed housecats that bring home dead birds and mice.

I guess we're born with the take-it-home philosophy regarding fishing. This has contributed considerably to the growth of well-fertilized rose bushes behind some anglers' houses–people who never did like seafood but needed proof that their sunburn earned something. While scorning such attitudes I suddenly realized that my youth was just as covetous as anybody else's–and I'm not sure exactly when I began to enjoy watching a released fish take off.

When about 10 years old and addicted to a tubular steel plug-casting rod, I sought largemouth bass with fierce intensity, rewarded occasionally by a 9-inch bass or an outsized green sunfish. I felt superior to cane pole anglers and certainly superior to those who fished with willow poles. I certainly felt superior to the kids of my own age with whom I went to the little spillway where they planned to soak worms. The water moved swiftly and we stood on a high bank several feet above it, where I displayed my casting ability with what I now realize was insufferable superiority and silly flourishes.

The bass probably wasn't really holding in that current but probably came from some nearly dead water along the edge or beneath a submerged boulder. He struck hard and it was the biggest fish I had ever hooked, the highlight of my fishing career. Somehow, after too short a cranking, yanking battle, I hauled him up to where one of the other kids grabbed him and held him up in the sunlight. I do not think it was a 10-pound bass; it just seemed like one and perhaps two or three pounds would be a more accurate assessment, but it was the largest I had ever seen and I felt my life had been a success–until the kid fumbled the fish and dropped it back into the water, free of the hooks.

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To me, after all those days of seeking a big bass, it was a crushing blow. For years, I was reluctant to mention it because I already knew the reputation of "fish stories." Since I could not take my fish home, I had failed my chance at fame. With some embarrassment, I confess that I must have been 16 years old and with many largemouths later when I suddenly realized that *I had caught the bass*. The fact the other kid had fumbled it had nothing to do with my achievement. I report with some embarrassment it was only after that I was able to happily return good catches to the water. Until years later huge stringers of fish made prized photographs in many outdoor publications.

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We can say all we want about fish collection being silly and about golfers taking home no divots or putters belonging to other golfers, but the fact is that possession is still nine-tenths of the angling law in the minds of some. We have seen this in the theft of fish from waters where catch-and-release is the rule.

I have heard managers say that the neophite hardcore environmentalist is often a poor conservationist on a wilderness trout stream. Once it came out like this:

"They go into the backcountry to commune with nature and to live with it and on it. And they kill and eat anything they can catch!"

Catch-and-release got its flimsy start with "putting little ones back." American anglers got some traditions from the British, who take meticulous care of their gamefish waters but tend to keep what they catch. An American who came back from Scotland found the gillies felt he was a little strange in wanting to release salmon. Then one greybeard said he guessed they had something to learn from the Yanks.

Some jolting facts about public attitudes on fish release came forth in national parks when tourists legally caught tons of trout and dumped them into trash cans. Strangely, when catch-and-release was made law, it was well accepted in most localities.

Years ago, a perturbed bystander asked me where he could report what he had just seen.

"That guy over there," he hissed, "is catching perfectly good fish and throwing them back."

And I've heard it called "throwing them away."

4478 -

SMART

Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

Thank You to a Landowner

To get to many of my favorite hotspots, I have to launch my canoe or cross someone's property. I like to do more than ask permission. I like to say thanks in a simple but important way. Each year I make several copies of a thank-you note and put the note in the landowner's mailbox during a fishing trip, or I mail it with a Christmas or other holiday greeting. I want them to know how important it is to have access to the water. They are willing to let me on their land, so the least I can do is take the time to say thanks.



From:

_____

_____

_____

Dear Landowner:

I want to thank you for allowing me on your property. I spend many enjoyable hours fishing here, and without your hospitality that would not be possible. In return, I promise to make sure that I leave nothing behind but footprints and will treat your land as if it were my own.

Thanks again.

Please feel free to photocopy this page and cut out the card.

Illustration-Ted Walke

Give the gift that gives all year long!











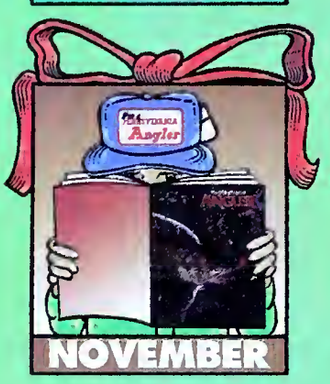
















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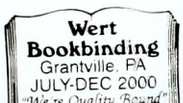
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